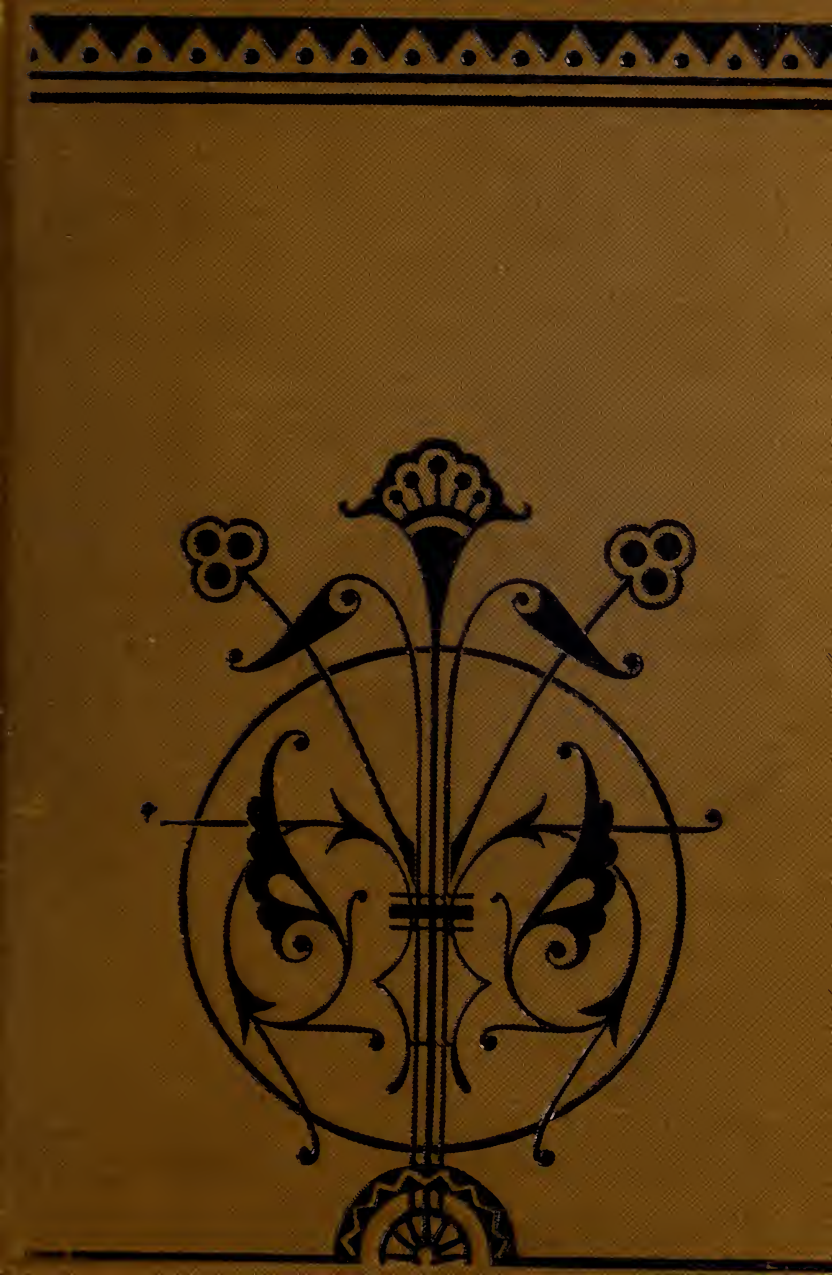


Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Purchased by the Hammill Missionary Fund.

Division DT70

Section .W55

Number

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

https://archive.org/details/childlifeinegypt00what

Child Life in Egypt.—Frontispiece.

CHILD-LIFE

IN

EGYPT.

[Mary Louisa Whately]

PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
No. 1122 Chestnut Street.

NEW YORK: 599 BROADWAY.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1866, by the

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

NOTE.

THE present work is compiled from two volumes, one entitled "Ragged Life in Egypt," and the other "More about Ragged Life in Egypt," —both by Miss M. L. WHATELY. It embraces the account of the author's labours in establishing schools for children in and near Cairo, and such incidental notices of the domestic habits and customs of this singular people as are necessary to an understanding of the obstacles which attended her benevolent effort.

It adds greatly to the interest of Miss Whately's narrative that it is confined to what came under her personal notice.

Sunday-school (and especially mission-school) teachers will find this volume full of suggestions and encouragements, to which they will do well to take heed.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAP. I.—FIRST GLANCE AT AN EASTERN CITY..	9
II.—HOUSE-HUNTING IN CAIRO	41
III.—THE CAIRO BAZAARS.....	23
IV.—THE HOUSE-TOPS	27
V.—FIRST ATTEMPT AT SCHOOL.....	38
VI.—THE BOAB'S FAMILY.....	49
VII.—SHOH AND FATMEH.....	60
VIII.—SCENES IN THE DESERT.....	75
IX.—VISITS TO EASTERN WOMEN WHC DO NOT LIVE IN HAREEMS.....	85
X.—THE BLIND AND THE SICK.....	99
XI.—THE CITY ARABS.....	112
XII.—THREE DAYS AT SUEZ.....	124
XIII.—RECRUITING.....	138
XIV.—A SCHOOL-TREAT IN CAIRO.....	153
XV.—THE TAMARISK-GROVE.....	167

PAGE

CHAP. XVI.—MOTHERS' MEETING IN CAIRO 181

XVII.—RAGGED SCHOOL REOPENED 169

XVIII.—VISITS TO THE LANES AND FIELDS.... 206

XIX.—HOW THE SCHOOL PROGRESSED..... 221

XX.—ZEYNAB 245

XXI.—ZEYNAB AGAIN..... 261

XXII.—THE BOYS' SUNDAY-SCHOOL..... 272

XXIII.—CONCLUSION 287

CHILD-LIFE IN EGYPT.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST GLANCE AT AN EASTERN CITY.

THE first sight of Egypt!—that warm, transparent colouring,—those feathery palms and graceful minarets standing out against the clear blue sky, and relieving the monotony of the flat, sandy coast,—that golden sunshine, making the shadows so deep by contrast with the intense light,—and those moving crowds, so different from the figures with which our eyes have been familar from childhood! One must pity the mind that cannot relish the novelty of such a scene; yet if witnessed a second time, after a long interval, the charm is almost greater, perhaps: a

pleasant mixture of novelty and familiarity seems to enhance the delight with which the eye wanders round the half-remembered pictures of Eastern life, and enables one to appreciate them even more fully than at first sight.

The tall Bedouins, in their white, flowing drapery, stalking through the motley crowd; the troops of ragged, vociferating donkey-boys, with their white teeth displayed in perpetual grins; the women, in their scanty robes of blue cotton and black face-veils tied under their eyes, and little brown babies, with tiny red caps or dirty kerchiefs on their heads, clinging to the shoulders of their mothers; Levantines, in half-European, half-Oriental costume, loitering about, cigar in mouth; ladies in black silken *shroud-like* dress, hurrying along to the bath; Negroes and Nubians in gay-coloured turbans, and scarfs of every rainbow hue; Jews and Algerines, Greeks and Turks and Maltese,—these are some of the figures that swarm in the streets of the only sea-port of Northern Egypt. It

is true that Alexandria is, compared to the towns of the interior, only half Eastern in its inhabitants, and even its buildings: numbers of houses are built in the European style, and fair-haired *Franks* are plentiful in its streets; but still it is wonderfully different from any city which a native of our "isles of the sea" has ever seen in his own land, or in the whole continent of the North.

There passes the first string of camels he has ever gazed upon! Who that has studied Scripture does not feel a thrill of delight as he watches them walking past him, associated as are camels with so many precious narratives and allusions,—with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Singular creatures they are,—gaunt, and yet stately,—awkward, yet graceful, contradictory as it seems; for they *have* a grace of their own: as each great, spongy foot is lifted up, the animal sways his long neck and looks down with solemn cautiousness, as if he were going to tread on eggs, while his large, beautiful dark eye turns occasionally to one

side or another with an expression of dignified contempt, which is almost human in its intelligence. The heavy skins of water, slung with hair ropes to his steep sides, make a sound with the jolting motion which is quite refreshing on a hot, dusty day, and the progress of the long file is marked by the drops which escape from the older and more leaky vessels. One man, and often one little boy, will guide a whole string of camels, and the docile creatures patiently follow a master who does not reach so high as their knees.

Bewildered with sights and sounds so new and strange, the traveller at last is weary with gazing, and rests under his musquito-curtains till next day dawns, and he begins the new life in those *old* regions where every thing has stood still for so many ages! The land of mummies and pyramids,—the land of the Pharaohs and their treasure-cities,—and, what is more interesting still to the mind of any one who labours in God's vine-

yard, the land where so many thousands of human beings live at this present day who know nothing of the "city of refuge," but wander in various paths, all leading them astray.

CHAPTER II.

HOUSE-HUNTING IN CAIRO.

THERE is not much of Oriental life to beseen while residing in a hotel kept by a European, and where, except a few native servants, scarcely any thing appears to mark that you are in Africa. To know much of the ways of the people, one must reside in a native house and in a native quarter. For this last advantage, however, we must pay pretty dear at first, by taking a great deal of trouble; for if house-hunting is a troublesome work everywhere, it is particularly so in Cairo, and the poor *hunter* is led occasionally to envy the wandering Bedouin, who has but to pitch his tent, instead of groping into dark passages and

stumbling over heaps of rubbish in search of an abode.

The old houses are likely to be very old indeed, very dirty, and the wood-work hopelessly full of vermin; the new, on the other hand, are not finished, for it is usual in Egypt to leave a house uncompleted until the builder has secured a tenant,—a plan very convenient to him, because he can thus leave many little details to be added at the expense of the said tenant, unless he is more than commonly sharp in making the bargain. The old houses, after visiting a few of them, we decided against entirely, and turned our thoughts to the new, as offering the least evils.

Some of the streets to which we had been directed were so narrow that the projecting wooden lattices touched from opposite sides, and only a small strip of sky appeared at the top of the houses. As the inhabitants keep the ground perpetually sluiced with water, these very narrow streets are damp even in

this dry climate, and, except on the roofs, no free air can be obtained in them. One house, however, though in the close Coptic quarter, where the streets are particularly damp and narrow for the most part, was well spoken of, as it stood at a corner, and was consequently not crowded on all sides by its neighbours. It was, moreover, quite new,—so new, indeed, that the staircase was not half finished, and a series of feats of scrambling, worthy of goats upon a cliff, had to be performed before we could reach the top room, whence a very fine view was to be seen, and pure air to be breathed. But the walls were not even plastered, nor the windows glazed, nor the doors made; and, to crown all, the workmen were lying upon the floor in one of the rooms, fast asleep, among heaps of shavings, though it was only ten o'clock in the morning. It appeared that they had been locked into the house to prevent them from leaving their work, and thus a fine example was produced of the effects of forced labour: they could not

get out, indeed, but they slept instead of working! The master promised to have it ready in fifteen days; but he must have been very credulous who should believe him, with the sleeping labourers before his eyes.

After many failures and much fatigue, a house was at last found, which possessed many advantages: it was in a healthy, airy quarter, and, though a *Moslem* quarter, many Syrian families resided in it: it was also very near the country, and yet quite in the town,—which for a school-house is a very important combination. This house was, moreover, so nearly completed that two days of active work would have sufficed to make it habitable, as no *paint* was used. The native to whom it belonged was a sly-looking fellow, but he promised to have all done in seven days. His future tenants visited their intended abode nearly every day during this period, to urge the workmen to work. But when the eighth day came, and they presented themselves, humbly following on foot the ox-cart which conveyed

their effects, the landlord appeared a good deal disconcerted at being taken at his word.

Yet it was the only chance for the tenants to get all things finished, to be actually on the spot, inhabiting such rooms as were fit for use; otherwise the house might have remained unfinished to this very day! The outside was clean and white, and looked pretty and inviting, but it certainly did require some courage to enter the scene of dirt, litter and confusion that appeared within. We had to spring over pools of whitewash, and climb over loose stones and bricks, in order to get to the stairs, where we were met by a troop of dirty, half-clad boys and girls, with hods of mortar on their shoulders and pails of water on their heads. Threading our way with some trouble among this ragged regiment, we attained the first story, and there found at least doors and windows, though the former, having neither locks nor latches of any kind, obstinately refused to remain shut unless by means of a violent *slam;* and then we had no means of escape,

and were prisoners till our servant came and forced the door open by the application of his shoulder.

In half an hour's time, however, a change took place. The sly owner sat at the head of the stairs, watching the active proceedings of his new tenants with great surprise; for, instead of reclining on their carpets in a corner of the dirty apartments and smoking a pipe in peace and quiet, as he doubtless had expected them to do in such circumstances, they were assisting their servants in clearing away rubbish and arranging and unpacking furniture. When he saw one lady handling a broom, while the other was helping the maid to uncord a box, and at the same directing the servant who was arranging bedsteads, he could not repress a broad grin; but as to lending a hand, *that* never occurred to him. By sunset he took his welcome departure, and the workmen also left. By this time the rooms, if bare and desolate, were at least clean and habitable. The new cook, a respectable Syrian,

was calmly boiling rice and milk for supper in the kitchen, which had only been finished an hour ago; and the tenants, sitting down in the palm-wood frames, covered with mattresses, which were the chief part of their furniture as yet, could at least say they were monarchs of all they surveyed! The rooms were white-washed exactly like the outside, and from the absence of paint on any of the wood-work, and a certain deficiency in straight lines and in general finish which is to be observed in most Egyptian handyworks, the whole concern had a bare appearance: the only seats were the palm-wood frames already mentioned, like the bedsteads, only smaller, and called *kavasses;* these are used for a hundred different purposes in Cairo; but, bare as it looked, it was a *home.*

It is indeed a work of time to get the simplest furniture, where every thing has to be separately hunted for and bargained for, and brought home by yourself,—that is, by your servant, or a porter or donkey-boy; for shopmen do not send articles home for you, as

with us. For a matt.ess it was needful to go to the cotton bazaar, get the raw cotton weighed, bargain for it, with the help of a more experienced friend, then send for a man whose work it is to pluck it and stuff the mattresses and cushions, and to watch him pretty closely lest he put it in half picked, to save trouble. Then for shelves, so necessary in houses without any closets, a carpenter is sent for; and when he comes he says, "I have no wood.' "Well, get some directly." "I must go to Boulac for it," (two miles off.) With great persuasion he is induced to try if the city of Cairo cannot produce a little wood, and brings some, of a bad quality enough, certainly. Two hours before sunset he is requested to make another shelf, having actually finished three, and replies, "To-morrow I will make it." "Why not now? it still wants an hour and more to sunset." "I am tired," (holding his head on his hand;) "I have worked all day," —which was not strictly true: "early, early," to-morrow, to-morrow.

It would be well for the poor Egyptians if we could teach them that *to-day* is better than to-morrow; but we must take them young for such lessons: our friend the carpenter was too old, I fear, ever to learn to do any thing to-day which he can possibly put off till to-morrow.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAIRO BAZAARS.

THE great bazaars, where the necessaries of life are sold, are the thoroughfares, and in the middle of the day so noisy and crowded that it requires much skill on the part of the boy who guides one's donkey, as well as considerable vigilance in oneself, to avoid being knocked down or squeezed to a mummy. A sea of white and red turbans is in front, here and there interrupted by a huge camel, towering above everybody and apparently going to trample down some half-dozen in his progress, or by a long line of donkeys laden with dripping skins of water, or great stones for building, loosely fastened with cord-netting, and threatening to fall on the feet of the passen-

gers; though, indeed, from the density of the crowd, they do not seem to have any feet,—only heads!

In some quarters the most lively traffic is carried on, and carriages are constantly to be seen, as the space is wide enough to admit of driving,—though not always with safety: the Arab drivers, however, are rash and headstrong, and dash furiously along, a running footman, armed with a long wand, going before to clear the way. "And some shall run before his chariots." (1 Sam. viii. 11.) By night the carriages are lighted by torches, borne by the *says*, which cast a beautiful red glare as they hurry past, and strongly bring to mind the passage of Scripture where it is said, "The chariots shall be with flaming torches, . . . the chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." Nah. ii. 3, 4.

But it is in the daytime that the chief crowds are to be seen in the East: they do

not, like Europeans, turn night into day; and, instead of requiring gas to light up their shops, when the sun has set they shut them up and go home. In *this* respect, surely, civilization would not improve them.

Women carrying bread, fruit or vegetables on their heads add in no small degree to the noise as well as to the crowd in the bazaars, their shrill cries sounding above every other din. They are not, apparently, thought worthy of keeping shops, but whatever can be borne on the head they may sell; and it makes a greater difference than one who has not seen it would fancy, to see all burdens on the head instead of on the arm or in the hand. At home, a troop of market-women have both hands full, and are usually bent to one side with the weight of a basket on the arm; here they are always erect, and seem incessantly gesticulating with their gracefully-rounded brown arms (I speak of those who are not arrived at age and decrepitude), and tinkling their silver bracelets, while huge trays or

heavy water-pitchers are skilfully poised on their heads. The greater number have their faces hidden all but the eyes; still, a good many of the lowest class are unveiled, or at most have only a corner of their head-veil drawn across the mouth and held in their teeth while passing along a public place.

The most picturesque and remarkable of all the moving figures of the Eastern crowd is, undoubtedly, the Bedouin Arab. Strong but wiry and slender in frame, graceful in his movements, as he follows his stately camels, or stops to purchase cotton or provisions in the bazaars, his striped *abba*, or white burnouse, hangs easily in heavy folds over his shoulder, and his dark skin and prominent features and keen black eye all mark the unchanged son of the desert, who belongs not to the city, but passes through it, indifferent to its conveniences and luxuries and despising its customs like his ancestors.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSE-TOPS.

IN the winter-weather of Egypt, which is for the most part delightfully temperate, the house-top is a very pleasant *perch*, from whence a view of great extent may be enjoyed, as well as much "native life" seen, which could hardly be gained from any other place so well. Our roof became almost a parlour during the cool weather, and afforded the best substitute for a garden that circumstances allowed. Standing at a corner, and, therefore, only joined behind and on one side to other houses, and being much higher than those nearest to it, our dwelling commanded a clear view of the city and of the country for miles round. We looked upon the gardens

which surround the city like a dark-green mass, varied by the tall palms shooting up their feathery branches amid the orange and acacia trees, and by the white villas and palaces of rich pashas or Franks. A streak of pale yellow or pink in the far distance, just on the horizon, marked the desert beyond the narrow limit of fertility. All around us were the crowded, flat-roofed dwellings of the city, of every variety of height and shape, with hundreds of beautiful towers and mosques, some dating back to the times of Saracen magnificence, others more modern and less exquisitely finished.

Down in the street below us, we looked on the humble sellers of onions, bread, or sugar-canes, who, seated all day upon their mats, soon became familiar both by face and voice,—the sugarcane-seller especially, who lived at the corner opposite my window, furnishing many an animated group for the sketch-book, in the crowds of boys and girls who came to buy her very popular articles. Her existence

A Sugar Cane Seller. p. 28.

was less monotonous than might appear; for she talked incessantly to any one who came within ear-shot, whether customer or not.

Late in the day, when sellers were making up their accounts, and a few sharp bargainers trying to get oranges, beans, &c. at a lower rate than before, the clatter of tongues was quite astonishing; the ringing sound of slaps upon some one's shoulders was added to the cries of "You dog!" "You buffalo!" "You ass!" "You *Jew!*" the last being considered the worst insult. They are a merry as well as a quarrelsome set, however, and at least as much laughter as scolding went on; nor are the men graver or more silent on their side. The Egyptians remind one constantly of the Irish, in their love for conversation, mirthfulness, and propensity to dispute and general excitability of character. A southern climate will give a certain degree of languor and idleness; but their *tongues* are not idle, as any one who lived in our street could well testify.

Some of the houses in Bab-el-Bahar were,

like our own, tall and white and respectable-looking.

It is upon the house-tops of the inferior dwellings that native life is most displayed. They are built of mud bricks, and stand so much lower than our house that even from the windows we can plainly see the goat sauntering on the roof of one of them, and the turkeys pecking among the rubbish, or the matron, in her trailing garments of dark-blue cotton, spreading fuel to dry in the sun, picking maize from the husk, sifting wheat, winding thread on reels, or squatted before a small extempore fire, cooking some of the queer native messes that suit Egyptian palates. On another, perhaps, lies an idle boy, fast asleep in the bright sunshine, while his little brothers are playing with the kids, and his elder sister busy with the "wash" of family clothes, or hanging pink trousers and blue shirts to dry. She seems to get up and down by a sort of rude mud steps, through a hole

in the roof which gives light and air to the dens below.

The roofs are usually in a great state of litter; and were it not that the seller of fuel gets a palm-branch and makes a clearance once in a while, the roof would assuredly give way under the accumulation of rubbish. One thing never seemed cleared away, however; and that was the heap of old broken pitchers, sherds and pots, that in these and similar houses are piled up in some corner; and there is a curious observation to be made in connection with this. A little before sunset, numbers of *pigeons* suddenly emerge from behind the pitchers and other rubbish, where they had been sleeping in the heat of the day, or pecking about to find food. They dart upwards and career through the air in large circles, their outspread wings catching the bright glow of the sun's slanting rays, so that they really resemble shining "yellow gold;" then, as they wheel round and are seen *against* the light, they appear as if turned into molten

silver, most of them being pure white, or else very light-coloured. This may seem fanciful; but the effect of *light* in these regions is difficult to describe to those who have not seen it; and evening after evening we watched the circling flight of the doves, and always observed the same appearance. "Though ye have lien *among the pots*, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Ps. lxviii.

It was beautiful to see these birds rising clean and unsoiled, as doves always do, from the dust and dirt in which they had been hidden, and soaring aloft in the sky till nearly out of sight among the bright sunset clouds.

It is from the house-tops that the street-criers, so characteristic of every nation, as showing the wants and tastes of the masses, are best seen and heard. Many of these vary with the season, as with us; but the one that begins the day never changes; and, though so much that is painful to a Christian is mixed

up in it, still the early call to prayer must always strike one as a most suitable commencement for the work of every day. Just as the first ray of sunshine breaks forth, the muezzin's cry is heard, "To prayer, to prayer, O ye believers!" It is but a form, alas! with most of the hearers: yet the very form reminds a servant of God of the privilege and duty of beginning each day with prayer. Then, when the echoing voices from minaret to minaret have died away, the "working-day" begins, and the wants and pleasures of man make themselves known one after another.

First is heard the milk-woman's call, answering to "Milk below!" "Haleeb wa laban!" that is, new milk, and that which has been purposely turned slightly sour and thick, and is a favourite article for breakfast, and also used in cookery, all over the East.

Sometimes a woman passes bearing a tray on her head, with small earthen-ware bowls filled with the cream of buffalo's milk scalded; this dainty is called *kishtar*, and

is much liked by Europeans as well as natives.

In the autumn, as soon as the harvest is commenced, the seller of parched corn is heard at intervals all day, and her store of young ears of corn roasted in their own husks is much in request. The sweet meat seller is usually a man, who goes calling out in the name of the Prophet—*comfits!* I do not recollect seeing a woman selling sweetmeats: probably it is considered a dignified business, as consisting of manufactured articles.

The most musical, perhaps, of all our street-cries was that of the seller of parched peas, and a certain little nut or seed which is much eaten by children, and, I suspect, by grown people also. "O parched peas! O nuts of love!" &c., was given in a really pretty, chant-like manner, and with a good voice.

The orange-crier was generally a woman; so was the seller of radishes. A little later in the day the sherbet-crier was heard: he had more custom in summer than winter, and

the tinkle of his brass cups was sometimes the only sound in the hot and dusty street during the sultry afternoon hours. The sherbet most commonly sold among the poor is merely raisins boiled in water which is cooled, or else treacle and water, or some such cheap preparation,—all harmless enough. The itinerant seller of cotton handkerchiefs and muslin for the ladies passes oftenest in the afternoons, crying his English cotton and Indian muslins, with long phrases puffing his goods, just as itinerant vendors do with us.

When the seasons arrive, the various fruits and vegetables have each their crier. "Sugarcanes! white sugarcanes! in the name of the Prophet!" shouts a fellah, or peasant, fresh from the country, and bearing a load of thick, pale-green canes on his shoulder. The purple canes are prettier, but I oftener heard the others cried: so I supposed they were considered sweeter. Then, when the *real* hot weather set in, about the middle of April, the cucumbers were in abundance, and eagerly

devoured by all classes; and the cucumber-seller had a very musical and lively cry.

Perhaps no cry is more striking, after all, than the short and simple cry of the *water-carrier*. "The gift of God!" he says, as he goes along with his water-skin on his shoulder. It is impossible to hear this cry without thinking of the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria:—"If thou knewest the *gift of God*, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." It is very likely that water, so invaluable, and so often scarce, in hot countries, was in those days spoken of, as now, as the "gift of God," to denote its preciousness: if so, the expression would be exceedingly forcible to the woman, and full of meaning.

The water-carrier's cry in Egypt must always rouse a thoughtful mind to a recollection of the deep necessities of the people, of the thirst which they as yet know not of, and of the living water which few if any have yet

Girls offering water at a railway station. p. 36.

offered to the poor Moslims in that great city, and makes him wish and pray for the time when his sonorous cry shall be but a type of the cry of one bringing the living water of the gospel, and saying, "Behold the gift of God!"

CHAPTER V.

FIRST ATTEMPT AT SCHOOL.

"MOSLIM girls will not come to school: you are sure to fail." Such was the saying again and again repeated when the intended effort was spoken of. "Among Copts," it was said, "*some* chance of good might possibly be expected; but *Mohammedan girls*, and of the lower class, too,—it was certain to fail!" Even a native gentleman, educated in England, echoed nearly the same thing that had been said both at home and here, by Europeans, though he cordially wished success to every project that had for its end the good of his country. "They do not wish for education in the lowest class," said he, "especially for girls, who are, as you know, looked on as inferior beings altogether by Moslims.

Besides, if you collected a few, who would come from curiosity, some bigot would soon frighten away the children, and tell the parents you wanted to make Christians of them."

"We shall tell them, then, that we cannot *make Christians;* no human being can. In Ireland the priests have cleared our schools again and again by threats and persecution; but the children soon return, and when they find it useless they give up the point. The word of God has a marvellous power in itself; and one point in our favour is, that the Moslim religion does not forbid the reading of our Scriptures."

"True," he replied; "they even speak of them with respect, though maintaining that Christians omit a part of the gospel which alludes, as they pretend, to Mohammed. But as to a *school*,"—and here followed an enumeration of a whole host of difficulties and hindrances to such an undertaking. We could only reply, "Time will show."

Perplexed, but not in despair, the little room was made ready in spite of all. The poor Syrian family who occupied the lower part of the house, and whose eldest girl, though but thirteen, was to be my sole teacher and assistant, took a lively interest in the affair, and their children helped to nail up a few prints, and texts in Arabic, the latter written out fair by the father for the purpose. A work-basket was stocked and alphabet-cards provided: nothing more was needed to begin with, benches and tables being unnecessary for an Egyptian school. All was ready except the pupils: how to procure them was the problem.

Our servant had been sent to ask some of his wife's friends to send their daughters; and, though a devout Moslim, he seemed to take an interest in the novel effort, and promised to spare no eloquence; that is to say, he told us he would talk "plenty." Meantime, I, my little teacher, and her mother, looked as anxiously out at the windows as if listening

for some one's chariot-wheels. The good woman hailed an old seedsman who lived opposite, and who was just eating his breakfast with his three young daughters, and in most conciliatory tones asked him to send Cadiga and her sisters to learn to read and work. "But we are Moslims, and don't want to learn," was the reply, given in a most sullen voice.

It was necessary to go out into the highways and urge them to come in. The matron, therefore, assumed her white veil, and we set out together, and went first into the street, and then into the lane near the house, where girls of all sizes appeared to be very plentiful articles. Every woman we met we stopped and accosted in a friendly way, and then began to speak of the intended school and urged her to send her children. Some laughed and passed on; others said, "Very good;" and at last we returned with the promise of several girls, feeling quite triumphant and thankful.

As we re-entered the house, a woman, wearing a quantity of coral and silver orna-

ments, though otherwise poorly dressed, came in with us: she was accompanied by a nice-looking child of nine or ten years old. She was invited in with the customary salutation, "Be welcome!" and, after throwing back her black crape face-veil, she began to pour forth a volley of words, of which all I could make out was that her child was timid and afraid to stay, but she would send her to-morrow. Here was disappointment! The first fish seemed just hooked, and now it was escaping the fisher's hands! However, I reassured the child by caresses and kind words, and they went away, promising again to return, which they did the next day; and I heard it reported afterwards that the woman had said, approvingly, "She kissed my child!" And she did send her next day; but at the time I could not be sure the promise would be kept. Presently, however, two little girls, about eight years old, trotted in, followed by their respective mothers and, I think, their grandmothers also; for several women of different

"No recruiting sergeant was ever half so well pleased with a handful of future soldiers." p. 43.

ages and degrees of rags came in, and there was a great deal of unveiling and saluting and chattering. At last the grown-up children departed, and the two little scholars, with the two Syrian children, sisters to the young teacher, were established on the mat, and were soon joined by several more, till at length, by about ten o'clock, we had nine pupils seated in a semcircle, *all* Moslims. No recruiting-sergeant was ever half so well pleased with a handful of future soldiers; for it was beating up for recruits for the Lord. Each was now asked her name in turn, and then who had made her, to which the older ones replied, "Allah." Several little ones said, "Mohammed."

The first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning," &c., was then repeated to them, and they were taught to say it, first each one by herself, and then all together. This was the *beginning* of instruction for them,—poor children! The young teacher was too inexperienced to be able to explain it, so I did

what I could in that way; and then we both set to teaching the five first letters of their difficult alphabet, till they seemed to be getting tired: they were then allowed a rest, and afterwards a singing-lesson was commenced.

The neighbours might have supposed a set of *cats* to be the pupils, if they listened to the discordant sounds which the first attempt at a gamut produced; but, as the proverb says, "Children and fools should not see things half done." Three months later, a stranger visiting the school was delighted at the sweet singing of the hymns. The mewing and squeaking were nearly forgotten by that time.

The children were delighted when the work-hour arrived, the real inducement to most of them and their mothers having been the needlework. Perhaps the teachers were not sorry when every little brown middle finger was supplied with a new thimble, and they could sit down for a few minutes. No one who has not tried it can conceive the difficulty of teaching those who have not only no *wish*

to learn, but have no idea of what learning *is*, or what possible good is to be gained by all this trouble; and of course the strain upon the mind is greatly increased when one's knowledge of the language is very limited indeed.

The children all took willingly to sewing; indeed, they had many times in the course of the forenoon thrown down the cards, and cried out, "The work! give us the work!" The English needles and scissors gave much pleasure, and were eagerly examined by some mothers and elder sisters who paid visits to the school-room, in the course of the day, to see what the foreigner was doing with their little ones; for, if ignorant, they are usually very fond parents. Some brought bread, bunches of raw carrots, or some such dainty, and, after giving it to the children, would squat down on the mat to watch the proceedings. Of course, it did rather interfere with business; but it will not do to strain a new rope too tight; and, besides, Eastern manners

are unlike our's, and I thought it wisest never to meddle with them unless some real evil was in question.

Though ragged and dirty, the children had not in general the starved looks of too many scholars in our own country; nor do ragged clothes and dirty faces imply such a degree of poverty as with us. In the higher classes, a child is often intentionally kept dirty, to avoid the evil eye; and perhaps this feeling may have given the idea that ragged clothes were no disgrace. In the country villages a blue cotton shirt is the unvarying costume of boys and girls,—the latter having the addition of a veil, the former of a cotton cap. But in the city dress is more varied, and most of the scholars wore coloured print trousers and little jackets or some other article: they looked much as if the contents of an old-clothesman's bag had been scattered over them at random, as there was not one of the nine in whole or well-fitting garments. Still, when, between coaxing and a little manual aid, the young

faces were all washed clean, they were not a bad-looking circle: several had very pretty features. The soft, black eye of Egypt has great beauty; and they all have white and even teeth.

On the second day we had fourteen scholars. As they entered, each kicked off her slippers, if she possessed any, at the door (I think more than half had some kind of shoe), and then went up to kiss the hand of the superintendent and lay it on her head,—both which processes became pleasanter when cleanly habits had come a little into fashion. One little thing was led in by an elder sister, a fine tall girl, about fourteen or fifteen, wearing the common blue cotton garment, with its limp drapery, and a pink net one within it, and what resembled some one's old table-cloth upon her head. This was *Shoh!*—a name almost impossible to render correctly by writing, except perhaps by a note of admiration to imply the sudden stop of the sound: it signifies "Ardently loved."

We did not know at this time that Shoh was married, and only supposed she thought herself too old to come to school, though manifestly wishing to do so. She came in and out, listening and smiling, and at last, about noonday, again returned, bringing an infant brother, in a very dirty condition, riding on her shoulder, and a quantity of oranges in the end of her veil. These last she poured into my lap, being a present to show her good will, and at almost the same instant the baby was adroitly lowered from the shoulder and popped upon the floor, with a bit of sugarcane stuffed into his little hand; while Shoh planted herself triumphantly on the mat at my feet, and, seizing an alphabet-card, began repeating it in an under-tone.

The love of learning, or curiosity to see and hear something new, had conquered matronly dignity; and from that time she paid frequent visits to the school.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOAB'S FAMILY.

OUR Boab and his family may be taken, probably, as a fair specimen of "Ragged Life in Egypt," or, at least, in Cairo; for, as far as we could see, it appeared that most of the same grade lived nearly in the same way, except that such small habitations as the one they occupied were not common inside the city, though often seen in the suburbs and villages. We had opportunities of watching the life of these our nearest neighbours, which made us well acquainted with their habits: indeed, it was impossible, unless we shut our eyes, to avoid observing them, from the peculiar proximity of our respective dwellings.

When we first arrived in Bab-el-Bahar, the

half-finished lower room was already occupied by the person alluded to, the *Boab*,—*i.e.* the gatekeeper of the street, or rather of the whole quarter. It seemed that he had intended quartering himself and his large family upon the new-comers, doubtless hoping that, as foreigners, they might be persuaded into thinking it a customary proceeding: so we found them sleeping in our lower room, as aforesaid, by night, and hovering about the door all day. But, for various reasons, it would have been very unwise to submit to this; and, after two or three "warnings to quit," they left the shelter of our roof, and about the same time the masons and their ragged assistants departed, and quiet reigned in the new household.

Our friend the Boab was not, however, going far off, as was soon evident from the operations set on foot immediately on his dismissal: in a few days' time a sort of *lean-to*, made of mud and plaster, and strongly resembling a pig-sty, arose just outside the

future school-house, whose wall served as a back for it. Windows it had none, nor could the owners stand upright in it; but there was a doorway, which, if not quite regular in outlines, yet served for them to creep in and out; and when the warm weather came, and the little den grew close (for the family was numerous), one or more could sleep on the roof, nestled down among the heaps of straw or other rubbish which generally lay there.

In our country, such a ragged troop, in such a close neighbourhood, would have been a great nuisance; but the evil was a good deal diminished in Egypt, because the climate allowed them to live all day out-of-doors; nor did they incommode us by showing any desire to pry into our concerns or meddle with any of our property. The children neither begged nor stole, nor, except sitting on the door-step and keeping it littered with the stones and bits of crockery which served as toys, did they at all interfere with their neighbours' residence, —which was lucky, as, had they been ever so

annoying, I do not know that we could have sent them away.

The family were, I believe, more "respectable" than one might have imagined from their squalid exterior. Our sketch represents the father, as he often stood, leaning against his hovel, which was considerably lower than his head, enjoying his evening pipe: he was by far the most decent-looking of the party, having always a turban of comparative cleanliness, and a pair of red slippers. His wife, if not quarrelling with her neighbours in the lane, or hunting down her children, or fetching water from the river (which were the chief varieties of her life), might be seen indistinctly from the door, grovelling in the dark recesses of her little abode, wrapped in faded and dirty blue-cotton garments, which hung limp and ragged about her thin shoulders, while her brown and wrinkled throat was decorated by a row of silver coins dimmed by age and dust, three or four of which would have procured her new trousers and a clean

veil. In the dust, just before our door, a little dusky creature, between one and two years old, is rolling about: that is the Boab's youngest hope,—and one of the right kind, too; for it is a *boy!* The family were considered unfortunate in having a much larger proportion of girls among their tribe of children; and though three of them, I think, had been disposed of in marriage, there still remained more girls than *Mrs.* Boab at all approved of. One of these was particularly fond of sitting on the roof of the family sty, enjoying a piece of sugarcane quite as much as her father did his pipe, or fighting for it with the neighbours' little boys who were playing in the rubbish with her. One little fellow, a neighbour's son, who had a solemn expression of countenance which contrasted oddly with his ragged blue shirt and cotton cap, rejoiced in the appellation of "Abdul-Nebby," or, the Servant of the Prophet!

He and a troop of such small fry were constantly rolling about with the Boab's children,

and were objects of interest and concern which they little guessed,—poor things!—as they laughed and quarrelled over the dates given them from our window.

A little degree of influence began, after a time, to be gained: they would sometimes stop in a dispute at the voice of gentle expostulation, and a little girl would sometimes run for refuge under the wall, when tyrannized over by a boy, and call out for redress with upturned face and imploring eyes directed to the windows.

In due time *Salhah*, the little maiden who sat on the roof, became a scholar,—though never a very regular one; for she was idle and saucy, and sometimes ran off to play with the boys again just as lessons were commenced.

One day she took a "huff," as children say, and stayed from school for a week, because another girl had torn the arms off a doll which she had with some ingenuity manufactured out of a piece of rag! Just after this we heard that Salhah was going to be married!

It seemed a horrid mockery of the name of marriage, when this little creature's utter childishness was so plainly shown by her conduct: she was eleven years old, but neither in looks nor manners was at all older than girls of that age among *city* children of the poor with us. It was found that the mother selfishly wished to get rid of the burden of her support, and that the mother of a lad about fifteen, who lived near, wished, with equal selfishness, to get a drudge who should carry water and perform menial offices for her household. Neither Salhah nor the boy were consulted, apparently, but the two mothers arranged every thing, and made a feast to celebrate the betrothal. This was at the house of the bridegroom's family, the *sty* being certainly incapable of affording a guest-chamber even of the humblest description. The feast did not consist of a lamb roasted whole, or any such dainties; but "they cooked some *meat*," we were told, with an air that implied this was no ordinary treat. Some sweetmeats were given to the bride-

elect, which were all she obtained of the banquet. However, her bridegroom made her a present, with which he had been provided for the occasion, as was customary. As they were poor, this only consisted of two piastres,—about eight cents. "What did Salhah buy with the money?" I asked. "She bought more sweetmeats, and then her mother beat her when she found she had done so," was the reply. Poor child! how we longed, on hearing this fresh proof of her youthfulness, to have her again at her alphabet and needle! Happily, she did return to us very shortly, for the match was ultimately broken off by her own perseverance: she had more spirit than a Moslim girl often dares to show, and persisted in refusing, till the parents gave way,—perhaps aided by the indifference of the boy-bridegroom, and the facility with which her place could be supplied, as little ragged girls were not scarce in that quarter.

A younger sister of Salhah's, called Haanem, was a more pleasing object to look at, being a

dear little thing of four years old, with a round, plump face, and large, bright, black eyes, and a sweet plaintive voice. She used to trot in among the earliest scholars in her scanty blue cotton garment (I never saw her in the possession of a second), and an old faded kerchief tightly tied round her little head, with two ends hanging down behind. In spite of this unbecoming costume, Ḥaanem was a pretty child, and graceful in her ways. It was amusing to see the earnest look with which she would bring her morsel of sewing to exhibit, and to hear her lisp out, "Look! is this nice?"

A married daughter of the Boab came, now and then, to spend a few days with her parents; but where or how she was accommodated remained a mystery to the last: possibly some of the young folks "camped out" to make room.

To do her justice, the mother was ready to dispose of her children, as was seen in Salhah's case; but the expense and trouble of support

was more of a burden than want of house-room to *their* feelings. The Boab received four piastres a month from us, and probably the same, or rather *less*, from thirty or forty other houses. The very poor would pay nothing, of course. This would make a sufficient income to live decently in that climate: so that I conceive it was more ignorance than actual poverty that kept them in so low a condition.

What the business of the Boab was I never could clearly ascertain. He always seemed to be loitering about our door, solemnly smoking a long pipe, or doing nothing, by day, and at night disturbing our rest by calling out, in a loud voice, "Yadai!" at certain hours in the night. We were informed, however, that he was guardian of the street; and perhaps some terrible evil might have occurred had he not been there. And every morning he went round to all the true Moslims' doors, rousing the people and ex-

"He always seemed to be loitering about our door, solemnly smoking a long pipe." p. 58.

norting them to get up and go to prayers. These were all the offices which we could discover; and if they were all his business, he certainly did not work very hard for his daily bread and onion!

CHAPTER VII.

SHOH AND FATMEH.

THOUGH a matron, even of fifteen, could not be expected to be a regular attendant at school, my young friend Shoh did her best to come when she could. At first her husband beat her for coming; but when he was in a better humour, or absent with his donkey, she would run across the lane and enter the school with a triumphant expression in her odd, bright face, and seat herself, with a card in her hand, upon the mat. But she was too full of questions to give steady attention to the alphabet, and, as there was little probability of her staying long enough to learn to read, I was glad to let her get what knowledge she could in her own way. After

a time the husband gave her permission to come, when not engaged in household work; and often she would rush into school, her hands all white with flour from bread-making, or with a piece of needlework on her arm, for she could sew in the coarse style used by native women, and soon improved very much in this branch.

The worthy Syrian matron, Um Usuf (*i.e.* Joseph's mother, as she was always called), had now taken charge of the school, as her daughter Menni was found too young to be my sole teacher; and this good woman, whom I had reason to believe a sincere Christian, took much pains to talk to Shoh; and while the younger children were eating their bread at noon, I used to make Menni read aloud part of the gospel, or of a simple Arabic tract, to Shoh and some of the older scholars.

The matron was fully imbued with the gospel doctrines, and pretty well acquainted with Scripture, at least with the New Testament, but was quite inexperienced in teaching.

We rather resembled the men in "Sandford and Merton," one of whom was lame but could see, the other blind but with good legs, who got along the road by assisting each other. So, with a superintendent deficient in language and a teacher inexperienced in teaching, we were one blind and the other lame. However, pains were not wanting, and made up for some deficiencies.

One day I allowed Shoh to pay me a private visit, which she thought a great privilege. Robinson Crusoe's man Friday could hardly have been more astonished and delighted at the very simple and even scanty furniture of the apartment. The curtains of white cotton, bound with red, seemed splendid in her eyes; the home-made pictures, fastened with pins to the white-washed walls, the toilet, covered with chintz, and the general air of cleanliness and order, made it appear a luxurious room to poor Shoh, accustomed to a mud-walled and dirty abode in the neighbouring densely-peopled lane. A small work-box, with its

contents, delighted her as much as if she had been a child of two years old; and when she drew from it a yard-measure made of a polished shell, and found out the mystery of pulling out and winding up the ribbon in it, her ecstasy knew no bounds, and she clapped herself violently on the chest, as if to knock the breath out of her body, rolling up her eyes, and exclaiming, "Wonderful! wonderful!"

It was pleasant to see, with all her childishness, how new ideas gradually began to take root; and though her versatility would often cause her to interrupt her teachers, just as her attention seemed fixed, by observing, "Let me try your ring on my finger: I want to see your thimble," &c., still she would return after a time to the subject, and she soon learned to associate the book of God with the school and with us; and it is surely something gained when the Bible is known as our flag and insignia, as it were, among an ignorant neighbourhood such as this! On a subsequent visit,

Shoh took up the English Bible which lay on the table and asked what it was; and I took the opportunity to explain that, though in another language, it was the same as the book Um Usuf read to her in school, and tried to impress her with a sense of its value. She asked more questions than I was able to answer, and seemed interested and pleased by the conversation.

It was very amusing to see the young matron's delight when, after an absence of several days, she obtained time or permission to make her appearance among us again. She bounced in with such a look of joyous triumph, seized my hand to kiss as usual, and then skipped round the room, nodding to the scholars, till at length she flung herself down in a corner, pulled the yellow kerchief off her head, in order to show that her plaited locks were clean and neat, then sprang up again and ran to the window-seat, where soap and water stood, to wash her hands, holding them up significantly, as if to say, "I know you are

fanciful about cleanliness," and finally snatched up a card from the shelf and commenced repeating her alphabet aloud. I made her a present of a small pair of scissors, having lately received a parcel of them from home; and certainly the superstition about edge-tools cutting love did not prove right in this case, for poor Shoh's regard had not diminished when I parted from her, and her joy at the gift was unbounded. She held them aloft, gazing with comic admiration at their brightness, pressed them to her heart at the risk of wounding herself, and finally relieved her excited feelings by catching Menni round the neck and half suffocating her in a warm embrace, while she repeated, "The scissors! The scissors!"

Poor Shoh was not fortunate in a mother, as I soon discovered. We were engaged in singing, one day, the children beginning to get some notion of a tune, and Shoh's hearty though somewhat unmusical voice joining us, when an ugly, blear-eyed old woman walked in with an extremely dirty child, of two years

old, on her shoulder. Having deposited him on the floor, she squatted down and began to make her observations. These visitors were Shoh's mother and her youngest brother,—for they were a very numerous family. When we ceased singing the old woman began to talk; and I gathered from her voluble speech that more children would attend school if the mothers did not fear that we should carry them out of the country.

I exclaimed indignantly against the idea of being engaged in a kidnapping transaction, "Listen, O woman! We have girls plenty in our country,—more girls than we want. Why should we take your's?"

Shoh presently interposed, assuring her mother that she had seen pictures of the lady's own sister's daughters, so little and pretty and nice! "*She* want *yours*, indeed!" pointing, rather scornfully, to her young country-folk, who really, if clean and neatly clad, would have looked quite as well, in their way,

as any set of English children; though we had no desire to carry them away!

Um Usuf and I did our best to explain that we had not only children but schools in our land, and that our poor girls were taught to read and to know God in them.

"Here your girls are not taught: so we have come to teach them."

"Oh, there was a Frank school kept by French nuns," the old woman said, "where several Copt girls went."

"That is not like ours," I replied: "those ladies teach the children to bow before pictures and images; they are '*servants of idols*'* (the common Arab term for Roman Catholics), and God's book is not read in their schools. But here we have no images, and only pray to God."

We endeavoured to show that it was not for our own benefit, but for the children's, that we acted; but it is difficult to make people who

---

*Abdul Soona.

are unaccustomed to receive any gratuitous benefit, beyond a mere trifling alms, understand such a course of action; and Shoh's mother looked as though she had both literally and figuratively grovelled in the dust too long to believe in any unselfish or generous affections.

But Shoh herself listened eagerly, and after a while whispered to Menni, looking across at me with a meaning expression,—

"Does *she* love me?"

"Oh, my dear, certainly I do, and all of you: I want you to go to heaven with me, Shoh!"

The girl's eyes, as she listened to this reply, had that touching look which we observe sometimes in a very little child when its dawning intellect begins faintly to perceive regions of thought which it cannot fathom. It is curious to note this strange, questioning, wistful look in a grown person, if poor Shoh could be so called indeed. We may have long to wait, for the difficulties that surround her are many; but

surely God has purposes of mercy for her, sooner or later.

Shoh had an older sister, called Fatmeh, who lived at Old Cairo, which is more than two miles from Cairo itself, but who came to spend a few days with her family some little time after the school had been started. She had lately lost all her three children by croup, the last only a fortnight ago; and this severe affliction had so broken her heart that she was indifferent to all her usual occupations, and "went mourning" all the day. But her mind was naturally inclined to the subject of death, so dreaded by Moslims in general; and something she heard from her young sister about the new school and what she had learned there made her go and pay Um Usuf a visit, in order to ask her some questions.

The excellent matron was only too glad of the opportunity, and told her every thing, as she expressed it,—meaning all of the great and blessed tidings of salvation which so ignorant a mind could receive at one sitting.

Poor Fatmeh's heart was softened by the tears of sorrow, like furrows by the raindrops from heaven, and she begged to stay and help the good woman in her washing, in order to hear more and to tell her griefs. "I will be your servant: I will do any thing, if I may stay all the day," she said.

Next day she came to visit me. A greater contrast to the active, vigorous, intelligent, but hot-tempered Shoh could not be found. The sister was at least a head shorter, thin, slight, and with more insignificant features, but with a sweet, sorrowful expression in her gentle black eyes, which looked heavy with long weeping. As she sat on the floor, her hands resting on her lap in an attitude of meek despondency, it seemed as if sorrow had resumed its sway, and the interest which a new subject had excited in her was for the time forgotten.

Presently she noticed the portrait of a little child on the wall near her: her lost darlings could hardly have been very like that blue-eyed, fair-haired creature; but still it was a

child, and poor Fatmeh gazed for a moment, saying, in a soft voice, "Very pretty! very pretty!" then bent forward and kissed it, and burst into tears, hiding her face in her blue veil. Oh, the sorrow of a mother without hope! No one who has not seen it can conceive how grievous it is to witness. I put my hand on her shoulder, and tried to comfort her by the sympathy which is a master-key for sorrowful hearts in all lands, and gradually won her to listen and to speak to me. She said they had told her her boys would have thousands of Houris to wait on them by-and-by in Mohammed's Paradise; but she did not seem to believe it, nor to care for these monstrous fables: it was her own baby-boys her heart yearned for, and no *falsehoods* could fill that aching, weary heart.

"Dear Fatmeh, God is good."

"Yes, he is good," she said, despondingly, —as if she would fain add, "that is nothing to me."

"They tell you that he does not love women,"

I continued; "but, Fatmeh, that is not true. he loves us all, all, better than we love each other." I endeavoured to tell her of the love of God in Christ, of which I knew Um Usuf had spoken the day before. The Moslims, having no belief in a Mediator, a "Daysman," who can lay his hand on suffering humanity, cannot, of course, understand the *love* of God, though they often speak of his wisdom, greatness, &c. The women are told that God cannot love them; and they are not even encouraged to pray. This has led to the belief that all Moslims hold women to be without souls,—which is not strictly true: individuals may hold it, but it is not one of their dogmas, though they look on the souls of women as of very little consequence: so that virtually it comes to the same thing.

Whether Fatmeh's husband believed her to possess a soul worth caring for or not, I cannot tell; but certainly he was very kind to her and fond of her; and, as she was not handsome, it must have been for her amiable, gentle dis-

position that he loved her,—which did both parties credit in a Mohammedan country. He left Old Cairo, at least for a time, and came to live near her family, who lived close to us, on purpose to please her, and allowed her to visit us as often as she liked. I gave her washing and other things to do, as a pretext for bringing her under Christian influence as much as possible. Often she would come in when we were at morning worship among ourselves, and sit reverently watching, though she could not understand; and she was always ready to listen to Um Usuf when she talked or read to her after school-hours. By degrees her extreme sorrow diminished, and, though far inferior to Shoh in mind, her more docile disposition gave her an advantage, as did also her husband. Poor Shoh often got into trouble,—first with her mother, then her husband, then her mother again, and so on. The latter especially had a really savage temper when roused, and sometimes beat her most cruelly. But I had hopes of both the sisters

long before leaving them: no one could help feeling hopeful who had seen them listening to the history of the crucifixion, which I made Um Usuf read to them one day, when they came into school during work-hours, and seen how Shoh's bright face worked with emotion, and the tears stood in her eyes, and how the sewing dropped from Fatmeh's hand, and how they looked at one another, and sometimes touched each other, as if to say, "Do you hear *that?*" In spite of many hindrances and difficulties, we have cause for thankfulness and hope about these two. The seed is cast on the water in faith, and after many days we may find it with joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES IN THE DESERT.

IN the winter season nothing in the neighbourhood of Cairo is so pleasant as the open desert. It was about the middle of February that we pitched our tent in a favourite haunt,—a ravine in the Wady Asfer, or Yellow Valley. One day a troop of little girls suddenly emerged from behind a projecting cliff: it seemed as if they must have issued from the clefts of the rocks; for where they started from no one could guess. They said they lived in a Bedouin village among these hills. A bright-eyed, joyous group they were, from seven to twelve or thirteen years old, apparently, clad in rags, but as healthy and vigorous as possible, their active movements full of wild grace, and their black eyes and

shining teeth looking like gems in their dark, bronzed faces, as they sprang about the rocks like kids, laughing and asking loudly for backsheesh!

I could not give money, but produced some cakes from the lunch-basket,—which gave great satisfaction. Several of the girls danced about holding the novel dainty aloft in their hands with a variety of gesticulations: it might be called the "Cake dance."

The faithful Daoud, always thinking of the interests of his lady, began to talk to them about the school, and said they ought to come.

The distance, I feared, would make this impossible; but the idea of a *girls'* school, and of any one attempting to teach *girls* to read, diverted them extremely, and, amid shouts of laughter, they cried, "Oh, teacher! oh, teacher!"

By-and-by the group was increased by two or three lads, brothers to these girls, and by a man and woman, who seemed to own several of the young folk. The woman's face was

mostly concealed by her face-veil of dirty lilac crape; but her eyes peeped above it with a bright look, and the man, who had but one eye, was rather an intelligent fellow. They all squatted round us in a circle, and began, in true Eastern style, asking us about our relatives, reminding one strongly of Scriptural expressions:—"Is your father yet alive?" "Have you a mother?" "How many brothers and sisters have you?"

Nothing can be more genuine than the sympathy of Arabs for the loss of relatives, but most especially for that of a mother, which they justly consider so irreparable.

The woman's eyes glistened with tears as she heard us tell of a broken family circle, and she turned to her husband, repeating the information with a voice that expressed much feeling. I endeavoured to tell them something about that better land where those who loved God and believed in his word went after death. We were not yet scholars enough to read to them out of the Arabic Testament,

though we had one, and showed it to them, and it served as a subject for conversation. They all looked at it with curiosity, and the boys and man each took it in their hands and seemed to wish to know the contents.

"You have heard of Moses?" I said,—knowing that Moses is a sort of hero in these regions, nearly all the wells of the desert being called after him.

"Oh, yes,—Nebby Moussa: we know about him."

"God spoke to Moses: you have heard that?"

"Yes, yes; we know."

"Well," I continued, "God does not speak now to men. But listen: if you had a father far away, he could send you a letter, could he not? You might thus know what he wished you to do?"

"Yes, lady, certainly," said the man.

"God's book is his letter to man. We read in this book all God wishes us to do and believe."

"Good! good! A letter! I understand!" he exclaimed, a light of intelligence shining in every feature of his rugged countenance, while the old man gave a grunt of acquiescence.

I endeavoured, as well as very imperfect Arabic would allow, to explain how "holy men of old" had written this book, taught by his Spirit, and how, though put into various languages, it was all one, God's letter to sinful man.

"You ought to come here every day," said the man. "Look, you will soon know Arabic well: then come often here and see us. Come, and read and talk to us. Come, and stay all day, till the sun sets, and then, when you want to sleep, I will give you a bed in my house." And he made signs of spreading something on the ground as he spoke, to make his meaning clearer.

It was certainly a queer idea for European ladies to sleep in one of those hovels, swarming with vermin and full of goats and ragged children, but his good intention was unmis-

takable: he was cordially seconded by the woman, and all the party seemed full of friendly feeling.

There was no thought of gain; for none of them, except the little girls, when we first saw them, had made any demands.

This meeting seems to give grounds for thinking that there are among the long-neglected Arabs of the desert some who would welcome a man bringing the tidings of salvation among the black tents of Kedar, and who would soon be ready to cry, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that publish peace!"

No one, however, who has had much experience in such matters, will be surprised that our next rencontre was less successful: at home and abroad there is always this variation.

Several attempts to find the village spoken of by one of our new acquaintances as his residence had failed. The sand-hills and rising ground in the desert make it hard for any who are not desert-bred to find their way;

and these little groups of huts resemble in colour the surrounding cliffs so exactly that one must be close to them before they are visible. At length, guided by a column of blue smoke from one of the huts, we came upon a little colony of this kind, where some half-settled Bedouins of the poorest description dwelt, in the midst of dirt, dust and rags. An ill-fed camel was eating a scanty heap of fodder beside one of the huts, and goats, fowls and children were lying in the hot sand, looking as if in point of intelligence there was no great difference between them.

Two or three women, clad in rags which had once been blue but now scarcely retained any colour, came out to stare at the strangers. Their faces were tanned to a hue almost as dark as a Nubian's, and their features prematurely worn by a hard life, but they looked very good-humoured; and when I asked for a little water, one went immediately to a vessel half imbedded in the sand and carefully covered up, and brought me some in

a coarse earthen jar, which she afterwards offered to the servant, drawing the end of her tattered veil over her mouth as she did so, to supply the want of a face-veil. Bedouin women, in general, wear a short piece of pink or lilac crape, or else one of a cream colour, being the natural hue of the undyed rough silk of which it is made. This is often hung round with heavy silver coins; and the effect is then as ugly as we should find it uncomfortable; but use is every thing, and the Arab maiden would doubtless pity us for wearing a bonnet.

An old Syrian colporteur, who was with us on this occasion, endeavoured, at my suggestion, to talk a little to the people; but, his private opinion being that Bedouins were quite hopeless subjects, it was difficult, if not impossible, for him to speak in the way likely to attract them. When they heard that there was a school for poor Moslim girls commenced in Cairo, they all laughed heartily; and I really believe the idea of teaching women to

read was quite as amusing and absurd to them as it would be to English villagers if some one gravely proposed to instruct their *cats* in the alphabet!

The old man wanted the tact necessary in dealing with these people, and, being rudely interrupted, he shut his book with such a despairing look that I feared they would all think it a bad cause, unless I tried to come to the rescue, even with broken Arabic.

"Well, is not that good that he has read to you?" I asked one of the men, a ragged, lazy-looking young fellow, who stood near me.

"Yes," he answered, indifferently; "but we are Arabs, and do not understand all that."

"You do not think; and that is why you do not understand any thing."

"Exactly so: I do not think," said he, with an air of great complacency.

"But you are not a camel or an ass: you have a soul within you."

"Oh, certainly! A soul,—yes."

"Well, then, you ought to think."

"Yes, yes! that is true!" (nodding his head with somewhat more interest.)

I then endeavoured to show him that we had need to think about our souls in life, because death is not far from any, and we know not how near it may be. He looked uneasy at this, and said,—

"True: all must die; but God is good." This was said much in the way one has heard many far less ignorant persons say it.

Bedouin Settlement and Palm Tree Grove

p. 85.

CHAPTER IX.

VISITS TO EASTERN WOMEN WHO DO NOT LIVE IN HAREEMS.

A VISIT to an Eastern hareem has often been described,—that curious scene, bringing to mind the tales of the "Arabian Nights,"—gayly-clad slaves, with jewelled pipes, fair Circassians reclining on splendid divans, graceful salaams, and fine compliments translated by a female interpreter for the European ladies: all this has been graphically told by many who have enjoyed the novelty of a peep at the "caged birds."

But the humbler classes in every place constitute the great majority; and it is among them that we can learn something of the ways and interests of the feminine population which

is scarcely possible in the artificial existence of the wealthy minority. The lower class of women in Egypt do not live in hareems, nor go out attended by a troop of black slaves, and, except in the custom of concealing the face, which is only dispensed with in some of the very poorest in the city, though little attended to in the country, they enjoy a good deal of freedom; and if their life be hard in many cases, it is more interesting, at least, than the gilded imprisonment of a higher class.

Every one who attends to a school knows how important it is occasionally to visit the mothers of the scholars; and this is more particularly the case in a country where education is at so low an ebb that much persuasion is necessary to induce the women to send their children at all.

But the visiting in a school-district in Cairo could not be conducted as such matters are in cities at home: the distinction of ranks is very slight; and though an humble visitor will sit

respectfully on the mat, instead of expecting a place on the divan, yet if the lady visits her in turn she must come almost on terms of equality; and the graceful courtesy of Egyptian manners in general renders this easy, provided the visitor is not too nice to sit upon dirty cushions or mats, and does not manifest any disgust at the bedaubed face of the little one who is dragged up to kiss her hand.

Some of the scholars of Bab-el-Bahar were the daughters of very poor artisans, a few of a still lower grade, while some came from families really well off, and, though they were not above sending their girls sometimes in as ragged garments as the poorest, the mothers would sport such a quantity of gold coins and silver and coral bracelets as would have purchased several suits of clothing.

Three sisters, who were among our earliest pupils, belonged to a Coptic family of this description. The mother had a good business, apparently, as an embroideress of women's

jackets. We called on her one day, after some trouble in finding the right house, for she lived in one of the narrow, dark and densely-peopled streets of the Coptic quarter, quite out of our district, though at no great distance. It felt close and suffocating, for sun and air can hardly penetrate this gloomy region; and one could not wonder at the sickly looks of the women, many of whom never leave their native quarter from week to week. The eldest of our scholars, *Hynehna*, a lovely girl about thirteen, espied us from the door of a neighbour's house, and ran up to greet us, her face beaming with smiles. She eagerly brought us to her mother's residence, which was close by, and explained that it was bread-making day, and she had been kept at home to assist.

We were led through a dark, damp passage, up a narrow and dirty stone staircase, till we emerged on a terrace, lighter and cleaner than I should have supposed possible in such a place. On this terrace the good woman's

room opened: she seemed only to have one, but it was larger than any three rooms in an English cottage, and very clean. She apparently aimed at European innovations, as several of the Copts do, having rush-bottomed chairs instead of a divan.

We sat down after the usual salutations, and the hostess began talking, first to us and then to the matron, so rapidly and in so shrill a tone that very little was intelligible to me. She had the remains of great beauty, the velvety blackness of her eyes and the whiteness of her teeth being unimpaired; but her face was worn and sallow, and the expression any thing but agreeable: it had a sharp, hard look, very unlike the mild sweetness of her gentle daughter. The youngest of the family, a boy of three years old, who, on account of his youth, was admitted with his sisters to school, was quite pleased to see the familiar teachers' faces, and rubbed our hands against his rough little head, quite to his own satisfaction, while we submitted with diplo-

matic coolness. Cups of sugar and water (the humblest form of sherbet) were brought to us by Hynehna; and just as she came in with them, another visitor appeared, a stout Coptic dame, in flame-coloured trousers and English jack-boots, handsome native bracelets, and coarse English gloves, which looked so droll that it was difficult to preserve becoming gravity, while she pointed to us, and said, in a loud voice, "Who are those?"

This was no breach of manners in her country, however; and, after all, it is more honest, perhaps, than the too common European plan of waiting till the stranger's back is turned, and then pouring out a volley of criticism.

Though a narrow-minded woman, and a very bigoted one, it was something gained to be on friendly terms with Hynehna's mother, and the evident regard of the children impressed her favourably. But the Moslim mothers interested me more, on the whole.

One whom I frequently visited was a Turkish woman, by birth a Circassian, but reared

in Constantinople, married to an Egyptian in the service of the Pasha. She herself embroidered for the royal hareems, and made dresses also: in fact, she was a highly respectable milliner.

The first time I went up the narrow lane where she lived, occupied chiefly by Moslims of the lower classes, I was only accompanied by one of the matron's younger girls, and a number of ragged children hooted us, and called names, and some even threw dust, but no stones, nor was any grown person rude; and after one or two visits they became accustomed to the sight of a stranger; the women even took to salaaming civilly, after they had heard that I visited a sick girl in the neighbourhood; for, bigoted and ignorant as they are, no people sooner see or appreciate love and kindness.

The only entrance to "Sitt Haanem's" abode was through a dark, ill-kept stable, where her husband's donkey stood. After stumbling along the dirty, broken stone steps which led out of

this, we came to a really airy, nice terrace, on which three rooms opened, which with a little care might have been made pleasant apartments.

An old, richly-carved wooden lattice commanded a fine view of minarets and palms, with the beautiful Mokattam cliffs in the distance; a divan occupied this corner, covered with white cotton and with a pretty carpet; but the walls were rough brick, not even plastered, and full of cracks in which scorpions might hide. A string of beads for prayer, a copy of the Koran, and a native mirror in a gaudy frame, were the only adornments of the room, and, indeed, its only furniture, except a very old cupboard of some sort, and the huge water-vessel near the door.

The mistress sat on the floor cross-legged, with some fine muslins for the royal hareem in her hand, and at the same time superintending the work of a slave-girl, in coarse blue cotton garments, who assisted her in the

simpler part of her employment. She was herself in Turkish style, *i.e.* her hair cut almost as short as a boy's in front, and parted on one side, a silk fillet going round the head, a short jacket and full print trousers completing an attire far less graceful than that worn by native Egyptians of her rank in life. Sitt Haanem was also less graceful in figure and movements than the natives, having all the Turkish abruptness of motion; but her face, which was rather pretty, had a very honest and pleasant expression. She offered me a paper cigar, and, on my saying it did not agree with me to smoke, laughed, and put it in her own mouth: she was an inveterate smoker.

On subsequent visits we had a good deal of conversation, and by degrees her bigotry softened. At first she used to condemn all Christians without exception; but latterly she would say, "There are good Moslims and good Christians, as well as bad." She was disappointed that her little daughter's progress in

reading was not more rapid; but the child's defective sight made it impossible she should ever learn to read: it seemed inevitable that she must one day be quite blind. We did all we could by teaching her texts and hymns; but, though an affectionate little creature, she was not bright. The mother was very fond of her, but not partial, as some parents are, to the degree of overrating her looks, and used to remark, coolly enough, sometimes, "Hadaweeyeh is not at all a pretty child; she is not like me!"

One day we found the father at home, and made the child repeat her hymn for him to hear. He seemed pleased; and the mother echoed the words, and said, "I know all that now: she is singing it all day."

One day, on another visit, we were speaking on the subject of prayer, and she said she would show us how Moslim women prayed. Many do not pray at all, for it is not obligatory with the inferior sex, and is rather thought a work of supererogation; but if they

wish to be "holy women," this is the form prescribed, as she assured us.

First she tied a muslin kerchief over her head, concealing all the hair, then spread a shawl on the floor, by way of a praying-carpet, and stood on it, making a variety of genuflexions and gestures, rather like gymnastic exercises: the oddest of them all consisted in turning the head from side to side, as if about to whisper to some one behind her; but not a word was spoken.

This silence is a needful part of the ceremony, she declared. I do not pretend to say Moslim women *never* repeat forms of prayer. I merely tell what this person, herself a Turkish Moslim, told me: it may be that this ludicrous pantomime was merely the most approved style of prayer, and not the only one. Sitt Haanem herself laughed at its absurdity; and when I said, "That is not prayer: it is good for nothing," she repeated, emphatically, "Yes, good for nothing."

We tried to show her that the vain repeti-

tions of the men were, however, not better in reality than silent antics like this, and to make her see that prayer *must* consist in *asking* for something and wishing for what we ask; but with an imperfect command of language it is difficult to keep up an argument.

Two days before our departure she visited us, and, finding the scholars at needle-work, came up-stairs to the sitting-room, where she found me resting after a regular levee of humble visitors, mothers and aunts of the children, who wished to pay farewell visits. No one expressed more regret than Sitt Haanem, though, like most Eastern women, she showed her childish disposition by the versatility with which she turned from serious subjects or matters of real feeling to the veriest trifle. With the bluntness customary among these half-civilized people, she said, in presence of the new teacher, "I do not know her. *I know you.* My child loves you. Why do you go away?" Then, casting her eye on the

table, she spied an English Bible. "What is that book?—is it an angel?"* Moslims do not seem, in general, to know that we have any sacred writings except the Gospels. I explained that we had both the gospel and a great deal more in this book, and told her how in the first part we read of Moses and David and the other prophets, and, in the last part, of Jesus Christ.

"After David was long dead, the Christ [el Messiah], whom he had written of, came into the world, and died for our sins."

"I know he was a *prophet;* but there is only one God," said she.

"God is one Spirit. We who believe God's word do not worship any but God. We are not servants of idols."

"I believe you love God," she said; "for you love the children," (pointing to the door, to indicate the scholars below.)

We had a good deal of conversation, con-

---

* *i.e.* a Gospel.

sidering the imperfect language, and she left with many expressions of good will and regret. This woman has lost her husband since our departure, and probably changed her residence: if possible, I shall trace her, however; and, at all events, it is a comfort to know that she has heard something of the truth, for our friend Mrs. R—— called on her and conversed much with her on one or two occasions subsequent to the visits I have described.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLIND AND THE SICK.

THE great scourge of Egypt is the ophthalmia, concerning the cause of which so many different opinions prevail, but which all residents know to be most severe after the inundations of the Nile, and at all times in the closer and more unhealthy quarters of the city. The people of the country appear to suffer less with it than those in the town; but of all places the most afflicted seems the Jewish quarter in Cairo, where every second person you meet is either suffering under some stage of the complaint, or else is blind, or one-eyed, or squinting. Some say the unwholesome diet of the Caireen Jews makes them more liable than others to this disease; but the extreme narrowness of their streets,

and the way in which they are crowded together, added to their uncleanly habits, are quite sufficient to account for their having a larger share than even the natives of the land of the "diseases of Egypt."

Though the climate of Egypt is so trying to the children of Europeans, there seems no reason to suppose it is unhealthy for native children. If they are exposed to ophthalmia, they are, on the other hand, exempt from many of the maladies common to the young in colder regions. The great mortality which prevails among the native infants seems, as far as I could learn, and also judging from observation, which, living surrounded by the poor, I was enabled to make, to be caused by bad management, neglect, dirt and foolish customs and superstitions. To any one who watches their way of bringing up children, the wonder is not that many die, but that *any* survive. The girls marry so early that they are totally unfit for the responsibility of a family, and, as they grow old, contradict the

proverb that experience makes fools wise; for the old women are as ignorant as the young, and more obstinate. The precocity of Easterns is, perhaps, somewhat overrated: certainly an Egyptian girl of twelve or fourteen, though forward enough in making bargains, and up to all the gossip of her quarter, no doubt, is more unfit to take care of little children than an ordinary specimen of an English village girl at eight years old. There are, as we know, ragged homes in England, and yet more in Ireland, where order and cleanliness and care are just as much wanting as in an Egyptian one; but an industrious, respectable artisan's or cottager's wife has some notion of rearing her children decently and keeping her house tidy; whereas in a country where there is no female education and no moral standard the difference is very trifling between the children of a beggar and those of an honest workman, except that the latter are better fed.

The fear of the evil eye, as is well known, induces even women of the higher classes fre-

quently to keep their children ill dressed and unwashed; and sometimes they go so far as to daub the forehead of a pretty or highly-valued child with *soot*, in the idea that this diverts the power of the envious glance which they dread! The bad management and unsuitable diet appears to be equally great among rich and poor, if I was correctly informed; but, as my personal observations extended only to the latter, I will merely describe their system, if so it may be called.

The first thing is to bind the head of a young infant tightly round with a dark-coloured handkerchief. Exceedingly unbecoming to the little face is this dismal head-dress. Nor is the dark-blue cotton shirt, begrimed with dust, much less so. A little jacket of coloured print is added in winter, by those who can afford it; but, with the *very* poor, all garments are not unfrequently dispensed with for young children, except a covering for the head. When it is cold weather, a mother whose means render it possible puts a little

pointed hood of coarse cloth on her child's head, which has a very comical effect. When not rolling in the dust, the child is always on its mother's shoulder, clinging to her head with its tiny hands; and it is surprising how, at a few months old, they learn to hold on as dexterously as monkeys; but often the little head is seen bobbing feebly from side to side, while swarms of flies are crawling over its unwashed face and into its eyes, which are usually more or less affected with the ophthalmia during teething. The mother cannot see to drive the flies away, from the child's position; nor, indeed, would she take the trouble to brush them away if she could. This way of carrying a child is all very well after a certain age, but must be injurious while the back is still weak. Even before the child has cut its teeth, the mother crams its mouth with a portion of any thing she is herself eating, whether it be a raw onion, or a ball of fried meat, or salted curd, or any other street-delicacy; and, as it gets older, she gives it any

thing it cries for, if it be in her power to get it. The shrunk limbs and unnaturally large bodies of the young children show how ill they thrive on this style of treatment. If, however, the little one survives all this, and does not die in convulsions, as hundreds do, or become blind from neglected ophthalmia, it may, after three years old, become a healthy child; but I do not suppose any mother rears more than one in three. In our country, with the best care she *can* take of her children, a poor mother may be compelled to see a delicate child pine away for want of sufficient firing and warm clothes; but this is not the case in Egypt: yet the infant mortality is greater than with us.

One advantage we have, however, in dealing with ragged life in Egypt, and it is a great compensation, I must own, for the filthy habits of the people, the ignorance, the superstition and the degradation: this compensation is, we have no *drunkenness* to contend with,—no fear of a drunken husband stumbling in while

speaking to a poor mother; no fear of finding the mother herself gone to the gin-shop! It is the *one* blessing amid many and great evils.

I may give an instance to show the native ideas respecting the treatment of the sick, and the way in which these might, by degrees, be first modified and then changed: it is the case of a scholar of mine, one of the most steady and well-disposed among the older girls. She was the only survivor of many brothers and sisters, and lived in a lane near the school,—her parents, who were poor, though respectable, being the only Copts in that lane. One day this girl complained of headache and burning heat in her forehead, which was alleviated by the application of a clean, cold, wet bandage, which I put on for her in place of the head-gear which she wore, and which must have aggravated the pain, though put on expressly because she had a headache; it consisted of a man's thick red woollen cap, which must have belonged to her grandfather, judging from its aged appearance; over this

two cotton handkerchiefs, and over them a coarse blue cotton veil, each article dirtier than the last, and within all the matted, uncombed hair.

The girl was better for the exchange to the wet bandage, but was made to resume them all on her return home, and brought word next day that her mother begged she might on no account put off the wraps, lest she should suffer from *cold*. Of course I did not again interfere, as prejudices of old standing must at first be cautiously dealt with. I think yet *another* handkerchief had been added, her head now seeming of the size of a great pumpkin! She could not attend to her lessons, and had to be sent home early, and the following day I heard that she was very ill, that the mother was in despair, and expected she would die. However, she would not call in a doctor, as our matron advised, but said, "If it were God's will her child should die, she *would* die; and if it were his will she should live, she *would* live." This fatalism, which the poor

wo ıan mistook for faith, is said to be nearly as common among Copts as among their Moslim neighbours, from whom they probably have learned it. I went to see the invalid, and found her crouched up on the floor, with a great cotton veil of her mother's rolled over all her former attire, so that she looked a mere heap of dark-blue rags, except for the melancholy, sallow visage which peeped out from among them. An old Coptic priest was burning incense and muttering prayers for her benefit, in one corner of the room, while in another sat the mother and aunt of the girl, looking the pictures of helpless grief, and with tears running down their care-worn faces. Both rose, however, and cordially welcomed me, and the mother put a cushion on the ground for me to sit on. As soon as the priest had finished his business, I asked a few questions of the child, and felt pretty sure that she was not in so bad a way as the mother imagined, and with proper care might soon be well again. However, to get rid of the wrap-

pings was out of the question, so was a clean bed, and sundry other comforts which sickness seems to demand: all that could be accomplished was a promise that her face and hands should be washed, and that she should take some medicine, which her aunt was to call for that evening. This was something gained; and next day I prepared some nice broth, which proved acceptable; and, when I came again, poor Ghemiana, for that was the patient's name, was better and able to answer questions more cheerfully. It was touching to hear her assuring the matron that she had prayed during her illness, and that she "did indeed say 'Our Father' very often." It was the only prayer she knew, and was doubtless but imperfectly understood: still, she had some comprehension of the meaning, Um Usuf having often tried to explain the clauses to the children, after making them repeat the words; and it certainly was an *attempt to* look up in faith to God, and surely was accepted, weak as the attempt might be. She

was a most patient, good-tempered girl, whether sick or well; and when she recovered, which she soon did, her plain face, with its heavy features and sallow tint, looked quite bright and pleasant, lit up with grateful smiles, as she came to return thanks and bring me an offering of Easter-cakes, made by her mother, as a token of her good feelings. This was just at Easter-time.

I went to visit the mother, among many others, just before leaving Cairo, and was received with affectionate respect, though shown in rather a singular way according to European notions. The good woman had been washing, and was reposing a little after her fatigues, it being now between eight and nine in the morning, while her daughter and sister took her place at the tub in a kind of den which seemed common to the neighbourhood. She squatted at the entrance, enjoying a pipe and the luxury of a cup of coffee, which I imagine was not a daily one with her, but taken on holidays or at times of extra labour,

such as "washing-mornings." On seeing me coming up the lane, accompanied by Menni, she rose and cordially saluted me, at the same moment offering me the little cup of coffee she was in the act of drinking. An Egyptian always shows politeness by offering a share of any thing he may be eating or drinking to a friend or superior who may happen to come up at the time. I just tasted her coffee, not to affront her, and, after hastily swallowing the remainder, she insisted on accompanying us up-stairs to her room, where we sat for a short time. I exhorted her to let Ghemiana attend school regularly after our departure, which the mother promised, though bemoaning the necessity of the parting very much, and frequently repeating, "My child loves you; so do we all: you must return to us!"

I did not observe much difference between this woman and others of her class in life, and Moslim women of the same rank: perhaps they were less *averse* to education than Moslims, as I never heard them say, as some

others did, "We do not want our girls to learn." But, *practically*, it was near'y the same; for they had such supreme indifference about it that they did not care to send the children if they wished to stay away. Ghemiana's mother was not more sensible, as may be supposed from what I have related, than any of her neighbours; but, like most, whether Moslim or Copt, she could be reached through her affections, and never seemed to forget the attention shown to her child in sickness.

I learned afterwards, with no small regret, that the poor girl had been taken from school to be married, before she could read fluently, and when a short time longer would have enabled her to master her difficult language sufficiently to do so. She cried, and begged to be left a little longer; but the parents, knowing she was both poor and plain, would not risk the loss of the match, and poor Ghemiana became an unwilling bride.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CITY ARABS.

AMONG the tribes of ragged, vagrant boys who swarm in the streets of Cairo, none are more conspicuous than the well-known donkey-boys; for they are quite a feature of the city. People are dependent on donkeys in a country where few who can avoid it walk, and where driving is not only very expensive, but impracticable in a great many of the streets. Every traveller, even the Indian-bound who has but twenty-four hours in which to "do Cairo," knows these boys; and we hear them spoken of as "Unmitigated rascals!" and "The pests of Cairo!" or "Smart lads!" and "Bright little fellows!" according to the disposition of the English

Donkey boys waiting for a job. p. 112.

traveller, or the luck he has happened to meet with among the species.

But few Europeans have time or interest for them beyond a passing remark, and their life seems to shut them out from the chance good influences of the very few who do feel interested in their lot; for, if a kind word is spoken by a philanthropic stranger who knows a little Arabic, or if the boy addressed has picked up English enough, as is often the case, to understand what is said to him in that language, the next traveller perhaps teaches him to swear, and, as evil finds a readier entrance into the natural heart than good, the consequence, of course, is that Egyptian donkey-boys can often say many bad words in English, and rarely any good ones. I remember a lad of thirteen or fourteen, who was one day guiding a donkey for me, not long after our arrival in Cairo, and who used some very profane English words. I reproved him, and a respectable Syrian servant who was with us

spoke to him also, saying that such words displeased God.

"*That Engeliz!*" replied the boy, grinning as he said it, and evidently thinking himself quite a promising English scholar.

How grievous it was to hear this, every Christian can imagine, and how I endeavoured, with the Syrian's assistance, to explain to him that no Englishman who feared God used such language. The boy seemed surprised, not having any idea, probably, that there were any Englishmen who cared for the name of God; but the impression was doubtless soon effaced, for to produce any permanent effect on such boys, long-continued efforts would be as necessary as with our vagrant children at home, if not even more so.

While quite young, and before they have learned all the evil ways of the elder ones, many of these Egyptian boys are nice, bright children, and would, I am certain, be glad to learn if they had the opportunity. There are native schools, indeed, such as they are, where

the Koran is the only book, and where that and the formal Mohammedan prayers are impressed on the boys' memories by constant applications of a heavy stick; but the class I allude to seldom go to these schools, their parents being too poor to afford the expense, and their days being occupied either with following donkeys or carrying parcels from the bazaars for strangers, or else in begging, fighting, and scrambling for a morsel of food, much as vagabond boys do in every great city, whether Eastern or European.

There was a bright, pleasant-looking little boy, named Seid, who often attended us on desert-rides, being rather a favourite in consequence of his docility and good humour. Some of the older lads are troublesome and impertinent on a long country ride, and will run away and leave their donkeys for a long time to save themselves fatigue, making the youngest boy present take all the care of the rest, if they can manage it. Seid seemed too young to have learned the bad ways of the

others yet, and his lively chat, whether in Arabic or in his droll broken English, was always harmless and amusing: he used to be both grateful for and diverted by our efforts to relieve him from the burdens laid on him by the older boys, according to the invariable custom of trampling on the weak, which is so painful a mark of want of civilization. Unless we kept a very sharp look-out, the large boys were sure to circumvent us, and we would see poor little Seid staggering under the weight of all the bags and baskets hung on his slender shoulders or piled on his head, while a strapping fellow of sixteen walked merrily by his side, munching sugarcane or smoking paper cigars.

Another boy, about the same age as Seid, brought two sisters to the ragged school after hearing it spoken of; but, unluckily, they were frightened by some one, and would not stay, but escaped and fled, just as their young brother had succeeded in coaxing them up to the door. Probably they were panic-struck

by some of the silly fictions spread by our old enemies the seedsman and his girls, who were ever on the watch to deter scholars from coming, by reports of the beatings they would receive.

But there was one donkey-boy who was more successful; this was little Abdul Leyl: he was a fine, interesting boy, of perhaps nine or ten years old. When questioned about his sisters, he said that he had one sister, and she was "a very nice sister!" Their father was a servant, and they lodged with an aunt not far from the school-house, their mother being dead. The aunt made no objection to the boy's bringing his sister to school; and accordingly he came one morning, bringing a little girl in a ragged loose dress of red cotton and a white veil, and a most gentle pair of large black eyes, which were her only beauty. The boy introduced her to the matron, saying, "This is Fatmeh!" There are hundreds of Moslim girls who bear this favourite name; but to poor Abdul Leyl there was but one Fatmeh in the world,—at

that time, at least,—and very proud he was of having been the one to bring her into the way of receiving education, which he had sense enough to think a valuable thing. Fatmeh proved a sweet, docile child,—less quick than her brother appeared to be, but steady in her attendance and remarkably amiable in disposition. Abdul Leyl often called at the school, slipping up-stairs and just peeping in, and then retreating, saying he came "to see Fatmeh." Fain would he have been admitted to join her in study on days when he chanced not to be wanted with his donkey; in the hot weather much fewer are in use; but it was not possible to mix boys and girls in the school, for many reasons. When some little rewards were to be given to the best girls, Fatmeh, of course, told her brother about it; and, happening to employ him the previous day to that on which the pieces of cotton were to be given, he took the opportunity of begging me to give something *pretty* to his sister, for was not she good? "Had not

the 'Sitt' said herself that Fatmeh was good?"

The affection of this boy was so pleasing, and gave so favourable an idea of his disposition, that we felt much interested for him, and, before leaving, I told him that the boys should not be forgotten.

Now that a school is already preparing* for the Moslim boys of Cairo, we may hope his turn is really coming, if he have not been already drawn away by the whirlpool of bad example and have lost his desire for instruction.

The name of Abdul Leyl (Servant of the Night) is not a common one in Egypt, as far as I know; and probably some family sorrow caused it to be given in this instance. The singularity of the appellation attracted our notice; and often we observed, if Abdul Leyl were to be educated and brought to the know-

* Under the Malta College Committee, who selected Cairo as the place where the first of their Oriental schools should be established.

ledge of the true light, his name might be changed to "Servant of the Day;" but, as yet, he and his comrades are walking in darkness and know not the light.

All who have had any experience among Easterns know the importance of getting them as young as possible under instruction: even at home, we all know the advantage which a child enjoys who has had some moral discipline and mental culture under ten years old. But it is still more important in the East, because of the greater precocity of the children. I did not observe *much* difference while they were *quite* young, but between those under ten and over twelve—judging from looks, for none ever knew their age—there appeared a more marked difference than we see in our home-schools. It seemed as if between these ages they became suddenly precocious, and the pretty, graceful, pleasant boy was changed into a disagreeable, rude, vulgar lad, acting as if he thought himself quite a man in every respect.

The life of a city Arab *proper* is one of less actual hardship than that of his namesake in London: the food of the lowest classes of Egypt is very much cheaper than food in England, and, if coarse, is not adulterated. Native bread and onions are to be had at a low rate all the year round; and sugarcane and cucumbers, in their season, are no expensive luxury. I have, indeed, seen boys in the street who appeared ill fed and wretched, but very few compared with those I had been used to see in Ireland.

Their clothing is certainly apt to be of the scantiest possible kind; but a warm climate makes this a trifling evil during a great part of the year. One sees them shivering and even suffering from bad colds during the brief winter season, the contrast to the extreme heat of the summer making it seem cold to *them*, though most likely *we* should consider it very temperate weather. Still, there is no question that, spite of rags, dirt and ophthalmia, and frequent beatings from their masters or older

comrades, the city Arab of Cairo has, physically, a less miserable existence than that of the English vagabond boy, exposed to snow and frost, sleet and rain, for half the year, and to whom shelter and strong thick clothing and firing are not luxuries, properly speaking, but *necessaries*. *Morally*, however, the Moslim boy is worse off, because his chance of falling in with one to "show him any good" is so much smaller: as yet we can hardly say it amounts to a chance at all. No open-air preacher for him; no city missionary to collect a listening crowd and attract their attention and draw them gradually from things of earth to things of heaven; no kind gentleman to stop him in his career of vice and idleness, by asking where he goes to school, and telling him of the ragged-school in such a street, and the shoe-blacks' refuge in such another, or the reformatory in a third; no pious neighbour to drop a good word and invite him to turn from evil. When not running after his donkey, or scrambling for a living in some other way, he

is lounging about with his comrades in the streets, or rolling in the warm dust by the road-side, clad in a ragged blue shirt, or the fragments of an old rough garment of hair, striped brown and white, which is so familiar to an Eastern traveller's eye, and a dirty cotton cap or a striped cotton towel by way of turban, as his head-covering: there he lies,—soul and body in the dust, if one may say so; and for long years no man cared for his soul; but we cannot say so *now*, and we believe that no home ragged-school will suffer because the attention of Christian philanthropists has been now turned to Moslim children also.

Perhaps the best motto for all who labour in the vineyard, whether at home or abroad, is, "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely." Of whatever creed, of whatever tribe, if he has not drunk of that water, he is perishing; and that is enough for God's servants.

CHAPTER XII.

THREE DAYS AT SUEZ.

TO those who have resided for any time at Cairo, Suez has become a very familiar name, being not merely the chief, but the *only*, southern seaport, and the key to India; and thus it is associated with many important things, though in itself a very unimportant-looking place. A collection of flat-roofed, insignificant, mud-brick houses, with one or two a little superior, belonging to foreign consuls, and one large white building, which is the English hotel,—this is Suez; and many people assured us it was not worth a visit; but they forgot the Red Sea. Were it not at all beautiful, it would surely be worth a visit for the sake of association. But the

beauty is great: the colouring given by that southern atmosphere must be *seen* in order to be conceived. It is very far superior even to that of Cairo. The intense green and blue of the shining waters, the transparent glow on the cliffs near the city, and the yet more fairy-like brilliancy of the distant Arabian hills on the opposite side, are beyond any pen or brush adequately to represent. True, there is no foliage, and one might weary of living in such a place, therefore, and wish for trees and streams again; but that any one with eyes in his head should see *no* beauty in Suez, nothing to make it worth a visit, is astonishing to me. The air is very pure and delightful, and more strengthening than that of Cairo, which, when the hot weather sets in, becomes relaxing. Three days spent at Suez enabled me to work with renewed vigour on returning to the school. Though exceedingly hot, it was not the least oppressive, and a breeze tempered the heat of the sun.

Within the doors of the hotel every thing,

except the Hindoo servants, was English; Egyptian life seemed to have disappeared altogether; but as soon as one left it the illusion was over, and the Arabic tongue again greeted one's ears.

I found several studies for the pencil in Arabs from the opposite coast, and in children of the town who came to play about near the hotel.

It must be an inveterate late riser who is not up early in an April morning at Suez. The delicious coolness of the air at five o'clock, and the effect of the sun's first rays stealing softly down the cliffs and gilding the waves of the Red Sea, are a treat worth a little trouble to enjoy.

At six o'clock I came down with a drawing-book to sit near the door, sheltered by stone pillars. A Hindoo servant brought me a chair, and presently two little girls, natives of the place, came up, and furnished pretty subjects for a drawing. They were dressed in their best, it being a festival-day, and were

very proud of their gay print trousers and spangled head-kerchiefs. I promised a cake to each if they would stand still, which they consented to do; and then, after admiring their own likenesses and vainly trying to obtain possession of them by entreaties, they begged to look at the contents of my travelling-bag, and presently pulled out an Arabic tract. One of them begged to have it as soon as she saw the characters.

"Can you read?" I asked.

"A little," she replied. I was doubtful, and proved, by showing her the letters in the tract, that she could not; she just knew an *alef*, but no other letter: probably some brother had tried to show her the letters when fresh from the native school.

However, the child was so anxious for the little book that I at length gave it to her, hoping that, as Arabs will seldom destroy any printed paper, it might some day fall into hands which could make use of it. A man who was loitering about, listening to my con-

versation with the girls, now came up and asked if I had another book: fortunately I had, and with much pleasure saw him retire to a shady spot and sit reading it for some time,—in fact, till I went in to breakfast.

The talk I had with these children made me wish we could have some day a *branch school* at Suez. They seemed very lively, intelligent little creatures, about nine and ten years old, darker in complexion than the Cairo children; but one was very pretty, and had a winning expression in her merry black eyes. They would willingly have stayed longer with me, had not the rest of the party coming out frightened them away.

The town was all alive with the native festival, and we were urged to see the sports that were going on by an Arab servant of the hotel, who assured us there were very amusing things to see, especially some man's performance, which he vainly endeavoured to describe in his broken English; for he was too proud of speaking it to comply with my re-

quest that he would "speak Arabic." "It is a man,—he from Jeddo—they make shoe—but not shoe exactly—it very funny, very good,—you go see it—like this," (touching an umbrella.) What could be the connection between a shoe and an umbrella seemed mysterious; but it was explained when we had, under his guidance, threaded our way through several narrow, dusty streets to an open space where a couple of tents were pitched in the midst of a gay and noisy crowd. Inside one of these—which was what he meant by "*like an umbrella*"—were a set of men who wore a peculiar kind of sandal, between a sandal and a shoe, fastened by green leather straps round the ankle. Some of these performed a rude kind of music, with tambourines, daraboukahs and native guitars, while a black man danced in the middle, his actions much resembling those of a Donnybrook jig. But his jet-black face and rolling eyes, and the bare arms and legs with which he made all sorts of queer gestures and antics, gave a more savage air to

the performance. The tent was crowded and suffocatingly hot: so we could not remain many minutes, and soon retreated into the fresh air again. Two or three coffee-houses round the open space on which stood the tents were filled with customers, though it was but ten o'clock in the morning, and the swings and merry-go-rounds were equally popular; and it was diverting to see the numbers of great men who were enjoying this amusement with as much relish as the little children. The crowd looked like a tulip-bed, with the gay colours which almost every one, even of the poorer classes, sported on this occasion. Among the children bright yellow was a favourite dress; with the men, crimson, blue or violet caftans; while the negroes and Nubians wore every colour of the rainbow.

We stayed here till the sun became too hot for Europeans to stand in; but the people did not seem to find the violent exercise they were taking in the swings, &c. at all exhausting. It was a comfort to recollect that coffee and

sweetmeats were the only refreshments partaken of by these crowds of people: so that, if childish, their amusements were more harmless than those of fairs and merry-makings in our more enlightened country, where drunkenness is the common finish to the day's entertainments.

While at Suez, we made an excursion to the opposite coast, which might well have been prolonged, so full of interest is that desert, had circumstances permitted it: it was, indeed, rather a disappointment not to get as far as the palm-trees of Elim. But travellers are usually dependent on one another, and everybody is not equally fond of sandy deserts and camel-riding, nor, indeed, are all equally fitted to endure the heat and fatigue. So we only went one day's journey to Ain Moussa, a well with an oasis around it, situated a few miles from the Red Sea, in the Arabian desert. We sailed across to the shore opposite Suez in one of the picturesque boats peculiar to the Red Sea, and then mounted the steeds which

awaited us there, consisting of some very indifferent and ill-fed camels, and some donkeys to match. No better could be had: so it was necessary to make the best of them, and to stick on as well as one could without proper saddles of any kind. It was unlucky for those of the party who had never before mounted a camel; and they kept their seats with difficulty for the first hour. Being accustomed to the motion, I was more independent of circumstances, and could fully enjoy the exquisite beauty of the scenery. Though all was bare desert around us, the distant cliffs on the African shore, with the strip of golden sand dividing them from the blue and sparkling waters of the sea, changed so constantly with the shifting shadows made by the light, fleecy clouds of the morning, that there was no monotony in the view until midday had arrived, when the heat became intense and produced a slight haze dimming the distant objects a little. But the purity and lightness of the air were such that I did not feel the least op-

pressed with the heat,—though I am sure it was considerable.

More than once we had the pleasure of seeing a beautiful mirage with the reflection of the sand-hills *reversed*, just as they would be in a real pool, in the seemingly clear blue waters; as we drew near, a faint mist appeared to rise, quivering above the water, and then all vanished into thin air, and the burning yellow sand and pebbles alone remained.

After the mirage came the oasis, like the reality of happiness after disappointments and deceptions. First a green spot came in view in the far distance, and we said, "Perhaps it is only a mirage, like the last;" but it grew larger and larger; then the feathery palms became distinct against the noontide sky of pale, cloudless blue. Then the groves of pomegranates and acacias, with their scarlet and yellow blossoms, burst on our sight, with beds of fresh green at their feet, and tiny channels of water running in every direction through the garden. A few small stone huts stood

near, occupied by the Arabs, only two or three families, I believe, who cultivate this small fertile spot in the wide waste of "salt-land not inhabited," and who defend it from the shifting sands by palings of reeds. The beauty was doubtless increased by contrast; but I thought, at the time, nothing had ever seemed lovelier than this little oasis, with its date-palms mixing their long clusters of creamy flowers with the roses that grew underneath them, and the trickling sound of the water greeting the ear so refreshingly, as we sat in the shade.

I sketched two old Bedouins, while the rest of the party were reposing or wandering about the garden, and found, by questioning them, that there was one man in the settlement who could read, though he was absent just then. I gave them a tract, therefore, saying, "He can read, and you can listen." They appeared pleased, and put it up carefully. Another of the party, sketching at a short distance from the oasis, had an interesting little talk

with a boy belonging to the place: possibly he and the man who could read are father and son: at any rate, they were sure to be intimately acquainted, as in a colony so small all know each other well, and would talk about the strangers' visit; and perhaps the tract may not be altogether lost even among those wild, ignorant creatures.

A poor Bedouin woman brought me a rose from the garden, just before we remounted our camels. It seemed more beautiful in the midst of that sandy waste than if gathered in the gardens of the Pasha at Cairo; and I thought, what an opportunity one with full command of the language would have had for discoursing to these poor ragged Arabs of the oasis: he could have shown them how the barren, sandy desert becomes fertile, and brings forth flowers and fruit, when the *water* reaches it, and that Moses' well and the oasis are just an emblem of the Holy Spirit acting on the barren and sinful heart of man and making it fruitful to the Lord.

During our homeward ride the Arabs who conducted us became rude and cross-tempered, and wished to make us hurry beyond our powers of endurance, because they were irritated by hunger and thirst, poor fellows! and anxious to get home as early as possible. I told one, who tried to insist on my camel's trotting, though repeatedly begged to desist, that he was not obeying God, as he supposed, by refraining from water,—that God gave us water, and has never forbidden us to drink when we need it. "It is not *God* who says, 'Do not drink,'" I said. The man shook his head dismally, and looked at the sky anxiously, to see when sunset would come, and then vented his discomfort in quarrelling with one of his comrades.

How much easier it is to bear self-imposed trials than to restrain the evil emotions of the heart! These very men, who would not accept a drop of water when parched with thirst, had no scruple in stealing the travelling-bag of one of the party, which had excited their cupidity,

and which proved to be missing when we arrived at the boats.

It was pleasant, on returning to Cairo the following day, to be greeted with a storm of affectionate welcomes from our Syrian family, and also from many of the mothers, who came early next morning to kiss our hands and say, with beaming faces, "The Lord be praised, you are come back! Welcome! welcome!"

CHAPTER XIII.

RECRUITING.

THE school had gone on swimmingly enough for some little time, when suddenly the scholars began to fall off, and the numbers became thinner and thinner each day. To ascertain the exact cause was not easy, as the children who continued to come assigned various reasons for the absence of their companions, many of which were probably mere gossip, or fictions of their own. The same thing had happened before, first from the old seedsman's exertions, or rather from those of his more active daughters, *his* ill will being confined to telling lies as he reposed among his heaps of beans and lentils; then the tale spread by Shoh's mother, about kidnapping

children, had for a time thinned our ranks; and even little Saida, the miller's pretty and most troublesome daughter, had, when in a spiteful mood, kept many new-comers from returning, by her persuasions.

When the school had been thus robbed of its inmates in its earlier days, I had tried all sorts of plans to get back the scholars, and to stop the false reporters who did the mischief. The old people were remonstrated with, the little torment was threatened, and even locked up by her father, at the request of our servant; but the effect of these and similar efforts was not very encouraging, and, taught by experience, I learned that the only way to fill the school, or to keep it well attended, was to go round and beat up for recruits from time to time, as well as to visit the parents of the old scholars occasionally. Leaving the matron in charge of the sadly-reduced reading-class, I therefore set out one broiling hot morning, at a pretty early hour,—*morning* visits, in a literal sense, being the only ones practicable at that

time of year,—and took Menni with me, into some of the dirty lanes round our dwelling.

After calling on one or two old acquaintances, we turned up the lane called "Aboubakr," in which several of the scholars lived, and which always seemed actually to swarm with ragged children of every age. It is very unlike the open, airy street on the other side of the school, and, but for the extreme dryness of the air, it would be as bad as the worst alleys of Dublin or London. As it is, no dampness exists in the atmosphere to retain bad smells, and therefore it is not quite so *dreadful* as the heaps of dirt and rubbish would lead one to expect, though very close, certainly, the beams of some of the houses actually meeting overhead, while all are in a state of decay and disorder beyond description.

Shoh lived in some part of this rabbit-warren, and, knowing that she could direct us to the abode of others, Menni endeavoured to find her out; but, while questioning some of the little boys who were rolling about in the

rubbish upon this point, a woman's voice called out to us, and, looking up, I perceived a tall, stout person, clad in the ordinary dark-blue drapery, standing at a short distance, and beckoning to us in Eastern fashion,—that is, waving the hand exactly as we do when we wish any one to *go away*. The face I thought I could recognize as that of one who had peeped into the school some time ago and introduced herself as aunt to some one of the scholars; but I could not be sure. She saluted us civilly, and requested that we would come and pay her a visit. Menni, who was a great coward, hung back and begged me not to go, in a whisper. But this would never do: no evil was, apparently, intended, and we were within a hundred yards or so of our own residence, and not unprotected, therefore.

"They are Moslims!" whispered Menni, as we followed the woman.

"That does not signify: come along, and fear nothing."

Some other women were looking on, rather

curious to see if the invitation would be accepted or not, and smiled on seeing us ascend the broken steps which led to the inviter's room, which opened on a sort of mud terrace which seemed falling to pieces. Her room was large, and only lighted by one window furnished with a rude wooden lattice instead of glass. Several persons were sitting on the floor,—an old man, smoking a long pipe, in one corner, and three or four women beside him, probably his married daughters or sons' wives, as they had not their faces concealed. Several other women, with infants in their arms or on their shoulders, presently came in, partially veiling themselves, though only as a sort of form, for they soon threw back the covering, laughing as they did so.

A young lad of sixteen or seventeen, who was, I think, the elder woman's son, was the only man, except the old father in the corner; but at least thirteen or fourteen persons altogether were assembled by this time, and Menni's fears returned at finding herself in

such a crowd of Moslims; and when one of the women patted her on the back, and said, "Little teacher!" she whispered, "Let us go away: they will only laugh at us!" But she was overruled, and the mistress of the apartment now begged us to be seated on an old bedstead of some kind, which did duty as divan, and was the only visible article of furniture in the place,—though it was so dark that some things may have been stowed away in the corners, out of sight.

After a moment's silence, in which we all stared at one another, the stout woman squatted down in front of us and desired Menni to tell her my name: then, patting me encouragingly, and with a most patronizing smile, she told me to "speak." Even with full command of language, it is dampening to the powers to be thus suddenly called on; but the difficulty is tenfold when the request has to be complied with in a tongue very imperfectly understood. In such cases, one can only recollect that, as a "broken sherd" may be used to carry a little

fire or water upon an *emergency*, so God may see fit to make use of very feeble instruments; and, when no better means are at hand, we can but take what we have.

Some reports about the school had reached this woman, and she and her friends evidently wished to hear about it: so I endeavoured to describe the objects we had in view, telling them that I came out this morning to ask mothers to send their children, and to show them that it was good to do so, and that Menni's mother taught them to read and to sew.

When we had got thus far, the woman interrupted me by asking if the gown I wore were all sewed by myself, what it was made of, and a good many other questions, feeling each article and giving her opinion on it before she would let us return to the subject of the school. At length the dress was exhausted, and she good-humouredly desired me "to go on speaking."

"Well, in our school we have one book from which we teach," I said.

"Listen! listen!" exclaimed the stout woman, turning round to her neighbours and echoing the words: "she says there is *one* book."

"Yes; and it is the book of God."

"Listen: she says it is the book of God!"

"All in it is good——"

"Certainly it must be good," repeated the woman.

"It tells us many things: it speaks of Moses, of Joseph, of the prophet David."

"Listen!" cried the echo, more eagerly than before: "this book tells of the prophets David and Moses, and also of Joseph." These names are much venerated by even the poorest and most ignorant Moslims, who know scarcely any thing of them beyond the names: the woman was, therefore, quite interested, and pulled her son's arm to make him attend.

"But, more than this, the book I speak of contains the Gospel also, which tells of Seidna Issa (the common Moslim name for Jesus), the

Messiah.—how he came from heaven and died for us, and how good he was." I added that I could tell them but little of all this, because I knew but little of their language. The woman applauded me, however, and nodded in a very encouraging way, desiring me to proceed, and the others said, "Good! good!"

I endeavoured, as well as I could, to explain that the Bible taught us to know and love God; that it was the *same* book, whether in English or Arabic, and taught all who read it the same things; and that if their children did not love God they could never be good, so we desired to teach them to love and obey him as far as we could.

"Do you pray?"

I told her we did, and that the girls were taught to pray to God; the matron prayed with them daily.

"But have you no pictures?" (meaning pictures to pray to, like the Copts.)

I told her that I allowed nothing of that kind, and thought it wrong to pray or bow

the head to any picture or image: the pictures in the school were only to teach the children, and to make the place look pretty.

"Do you not beat the girls?"

"No, no! certainly not. We have no sticks: we have books, needles, thimbles, pictures to teach them, but no sticks."

All the party laughed at this; for a school without a stick to beat the pupils was quite a novel idea, but it pleased them very well. Shortly after I took leave, amid many friendly "salaams," and the women dispersed.

Several of our old pupils whom we met standing at their doors or playing about were accosted; and some promised to come back to school, having stayed away only from idleness. One had been kept by her mother to help make bread, and showed a face and arms all white with flour, but grinned with satisfaction at being visited, and promised not to fail to come when the bread was done. This poor child, whose name was Mĕllaky (princess), was particularly wretched-looking, and did not seem

to have always bread enough to eat, judging from her appearance: her name was a mockery, in contrast to her dirty blue rags. Shoh was out, but we picked up recruits enough without her aid; and when we returned home, pretty well heated and tired, though it was scarcely yet ten o'clock, an incursion of bright-eyed, wild, untamed little creatures soon followed us, and rushed into the school-room, in a body, to prove the success of the effort.

Some were old scholars returned, but more were new ones; and though they did not all prove steady pupils and come regularly, still, if a few were thus caught, it was something; and similar visiting and recruiting excursions from time to time would, with God's blessing, prove the best way of keeping up the numbers: at least, so it appears to me. We must be prepared for a very fluctuating attendance at all times in a school for the poorest class of children, and in a country where the girls are taken away to be married so early; and from time to time opposition, and perhaps persecu-

tion, may arise; but I see no reason to be discouraged, on the whole: there is much to *hope* as well as much to *fear*, and by degrees some of these wild colts will be tamed down and brought under Christian *influence*. More we cannot do: no human power can make converts; and therefore it is in perfect honesty and good faith that we can reply to those who say, "Do you mean to make Christians of your pupils?" "We are not able to do so: we shall teach them God's word and tell them the truth; but it is not our province to make Christians."

The *new* recruits were dreadfully dirty, of course, and it was quite diverting to see one or two of the earlier ones leading them to the water-jar and assisting them to wash face and hands, saying, "O girl, thou art dirty!" just as if they had not been exactly the same a little while ago. They were all promised a treat, that is to say, a visit to a garden,—their highest idea of enjoyment,—if they were good and came steadily to school; and the hope was

doubtless an assistance to some weak memories.

It was on this day, and while the children were just going to commence needlework (that is, about the hottest part of the twenty-four hours), that we had a specimen of domestic life of a very painful kind. Screams and loud talking in the lane attracted our attention, and, looking out of a window, a street-*row* was perceived to be going on. A young woman was struggling in the midst of a crowd, and two older women were beating her furiously and tearing her clothes, while she shrieked and scolded in return; and the crowd, who were chiefly women and children, did not seem to be making the slightest effort to rescue her. We soon saw that poor Shoh was the victim: one of the women dragged her along the ground by her long hair, her veil having been torn off, and struck her when she attempted to rise.

I sent Um Usuf down to try and separate them, but, ere she could reach them, Shoh had been still further aggravated: a boy, insti-

gated by one of the women, rushed on her and bit her arm and shoulder cruelly. She then rolled on the ground, like a wild animal, refusing to rise even when the matron came up and tried to help her: presently she started up by a sudden effort, and began raving and, I fear, swearing at her tormentors, who seemed meditating afresh attack.

Um Usuf looked up to the window, and said, "What shall I do? she will not come with me." I ran down myself, hoping she might yield to me. The crowd, which had been augmented by several men, did not attempt to make way for me; but when I gently pushed one or two of the women they looked round and then drew back a little, so that I could force a passage through to the sobbing Shoh. I caught her arm, and said, "Come, my poor child; come with me!" She followed without a word, nor did the women oppose her departure: they were no others than her own mother and aunt, who had been provoked with

her for declining to lend the aunt a new jacket she had just made for herself.

I led the poor victim up-stairs into the matron's room: she was a deplorable figure, with her dishevelled hair and torn and dusty dress, and face flushed crimson through its dark skin, and all stained with tears and dirt. She stripped up her sleeve, and I saw the arm actually bleeding and bearing the marks of the boy's teeth,—her own cousin, he probably was; for the aunt was the one who had set him on to this cowardly and savage action to revenge her supposed wrong. I bound up the wound with a bandage steeped in arnica and water, which healed it entirely in a couple of days, by being renewed occasionally. But the bitter feelings excited by such a scene were not likely to be so soon cured. She was left to lie down, after a composing draught, on the matron's bed for an hour's rest, after which she went quietly home. Does not such a scene show the crying necessity for female education in the East?

CHAPTER XIV.

A SCHOOL-TREAT IN CAIRO.

I FEAR our English friends would have said we were a disorderly set could they have seen the preparations for a little excursion given to the children in the month of May.

To be sure, it was a strange contrast to the "school-treats" now so familiar to all who take an interest in the rising generation; but "with wolves one must howl," says the German proverb, and, without carrying out this very liberal-minded axiom to the uttermost, one must accommodate things to national tastes in a certain degree; and, moreover, even the order and discipline we hope in time to attain cannot be expected all at once.

Instead of a tidy and somewhat stiff-looking mistress, in a spotless bonnet and shawl and well-ironed collar, ushering an array of little damsels in brown-stuff frocks and white tippets, or, if not in uniform, at least "got up" with new ribbons on their straw bonnets and as much starch as possible in their clean pinafores, all waiting the word of command, in rows of military precision,—instead of this, what a scene of confusion we were, in spite of the matron's frequent "Be quiet, O girls! wait a little."

By six o'clock in the morning a number of the scholars were rushing up- and down-stairs, and I believe at a still earlier hour some had been sitting on the door-sill, clamouring to set out for the garden, and assuring us that it was quite time, "for it was *daylight!*"

However, could our friends have seen the same set when *freshly caught* a few months before, they would have thought that, under the circumstances, the progress was very fair. If they were obstreperous, poor little things!

they would come when called, and do what they were told, and were eagerly expecting an excursion with their Christian teachers,—though so timid and unused to stir from home are Eastern girls that a little while ago they would not have ventured the length of the street with us, nor would the mothers have allowed them to go: so that the very tumult of joy implied a *change* for the better, as showing the confidence gained.

While we hastily drank our coffee, the sound of joyous young voices was heard on the stairs, and, when we descended, some were squatting on the steps at the door, and others dancing in the matron's room, while she performed her toilet. That excellent woman, not being given to *fuss* about trifles, bore it all with good-humoured placidity, only now and then remarking that she should lose her head, or something to that effect, to which her scholars replied by coaxing down her dress with their hands, or patting her affectionately on the back; which, be it remembered, is not

a disrespectful action to a superior in Egypt, nor does it imply the familiarity it would among us. A curious assembly the young folks made, certainly: some had only a plain blue cotton robe, scanty and ragged, others had gay print trousers, and one or two sported an old silk jacket with tarnished gold embroidery; all had their heads bound with kerchiefs of various kinds, and a veil of some sort was indispensable even to the poorest. Altogether, they looked as if their attire had been taken out of an old-clothesman's bag, or as if they had all obtained access to a lady's chest of drawers and pulled out old ragged scarfs and worn-out shawls to their heart's content. But, in spite of the odd mixture of new and old clothes, rags and finery, there was a certain grace which seemed inherent in them all. Every Egyptian girl knows how to put on a veil: if you lend her an old table-cloth, she will, with one turn of her hand, throw it round her in the most graceful folds possible, and wear it as no

European child can manage to do;—even little Haanem, who was but five years old, would make a large pocket-handkerchief into a veil if she got the opportunity. In accordance with the known sentiments of the teachers, all had clean faces and hands; and these, with a merry and happy expression of countenance, are certainly the most essential adornments for any kind of festival. There was but one drawback to the general gayety, and, selfish as children naturally are, I think some of them felt it; and this was the group of little boys who stood round the happy party at the door, wishing they could accompany their sisters, and looking wistfully at the preparations for a treat they could not share.

It was impossible, with deference to Moslim prejudices and habits, to mix boys and girls in school, and to include them in the "picnic" equally so; but it was trying to the little fellows, and we felt extremely for them. Several, who had sisters at school, had begged frequently to be admitted; and not very long

before this, a little mob of little boys, "who lived in the lane," had assailed our door with shouts of "O teacher! My teacher! we wish to come to school!" so it was not *merely* the intended festival that made them feel envious of their sisters, though it naturally put the climax on such feelings. At the last moment, the matron, having forgotten something,—her pipe, perhaps,—went back for it, and happened to notice a boy of ten years old standing sadly at the door, his great black eyes looking earnestly at the departing group, and she heard him exclaim, in a piteous voice, "I wish I were a girl!" "No one can *fully* estimate this speech," said a friend of our's who had spent his earliest years in the East, "who has not been intimately acquainted with the feelings and habits of those countries." It was indeed a triumph to the little school that it caused an Egyptian boy, even for a moment, to wish himself a girl! But it was a sad triumph just then; for what could be done? All that was possible was to assure the poor boy—

which I did on our return, finding him still loitering about—that the *boys'* case should be made known to our countrymen, and that perhaps some of them, who loved poor boys and made schools for them in England, would spare something for poor boys in Egypt.

Metawaly (for that was his name) was son to the man who kept a fruit and cucumber shop underneath the school, and, being so near a neighbour, he would often steal upstairs to see what the girls were about, and beg to be taken in, that he might learn also; and it was grievous to have to refuse so willing a pupil.

But to return to our festival: at seven o'clock the children, with the matron, were sent on in an advance guard, and we followed shortly after, a donkey being laden with carpets, and the servant carrying a basket with the eatables. These consisted of cakes flavoured with saffron, and a large parcel of native sweetmeats. The most favourite sort was a cake made of native treacle and beaten egg,

with grains of sesame strewn over it. Coffee, in the Eastern style, was to be added to these dainties. It was extremely hot, even at this hour; but the Khamseen was not blowing: the heat was not, therefore, oppressive.

The owner of a garden to which we had on a previous occasion taken the children would not let us in now, as his crops were in a state to be easily injured, and he did not know, poor man! that the girls were now trained sufficiently to be trusted not to do mischief, —which really was the case.

We were, therefore, obliged to choose a quite retired spot in a great public garden, which might be made beautiful if properly cultivated; but even in its rude condition it was quite a paradise to these children. At so early an hour there was little fear of interruption for us, and the spot selected, under an immense sycamore fig-tree and surrounded by hedges of myrtle and pomegranates, was quite removed from the road. It is a custom, though whether a legal one or not I do not

know, for every one to pick what flowers he can find in this garden. The boys, however, are beforehand with them, in general, and pick every rose-bud for the coffee-houses: still, a few were discovered among the hedges, and plenty of yellow acacia-blossoms, and a few scarlet pomegranate-flowers. Each little girl had soon the happiness of having a flower stuck upon her head.

The clapping of hands and chattering were considerable as the simple preparations were made. A red Arab blanket had been spread on the ground for them to sit on, and cakes and coffee were served; while the matron sat, calmly smoking her pipe, on her own carpet, close by.

One or two peasants passed, but took no other notice of us than giving a good-humoured smile. It was too early in the day, as before remarked, to be at all public. A solitary Italian, however, chanced to be taking a morning walk, and was much surprised at coming suddenly upon our party. He seemed

to be a respectable tradesman, and was as much interested as astonished at the novel sight. He politely inquired who these children were, and what had brought them here. When he heard that it was a school, and that most of the pupils were Moslims, he expressed much surprise, and said he knew the French nuns had a school, but he believed the pupils were all Copts.

"We have both," I replied; "but this school is very different from the one you speak of. Those ladies do not teach God's word. Here, it is the only book the children read. We do not consider that education is worth any thing unless it is founded on the word of God." He quite agreed to this, and assured me that he had a little girl of his own, whom he would not send to school, because he did not choose to place her under the care of the nuns. We had a little more conversation, and he accepted an Italian hand-bill with pleasure, wishing us all success: he then touched his hat respectfully, and bade us good-morning.

The older children had appeared frightened during the interview: so little used are they to intercourse with the English, or, indeed, with any strangers, that they appeared to think this harmless person a sort of ogre. One of them, clasping me round the waist as soon as he was gone, exclaimed, "Oh, teacher! were you not frightened?"—just as she might have done had any one come safe out of an encounter with a wild bull.

"What should I have been frightened at?" said I. "The gentleman was very good-natured: he told me he had a little girl of your age, and wished peace to you all."

"Oh, but he was a Frank! I was so frightened for you,—very much frightened!"

When the feast was over, the younger ones danced in a circle, waving little boughs in a perfect ecstasy of merriment; and very picturesque they looked at a distance, with their floating veils of blue, white, or red: the rags did not make any *show* at a hundred yards off, and the group was so joyous and graceful!

But the older girls seemed to find no pleasure so great as following us about, pointing to the flowers, and frequently throwing their arms round us, exclaiming, "I love thee! I love thee much!" with eyes really overflowing with affection. How often had it been said, "You can make nothing of Moslim girls!" but the key of love is wonderfully powerful, and equally so in every land, in opening the doors of young hearts.

When it was too hot for us to walk any more, they all insisted on sitting down in a circle round us, and, while we made garlands to amuse them, they sang a sort of extempore song, with clapping of hands, something in the style of the Nile boatmen, the chorus being, "The teacher has brought us to the garden! Oh, the garden! the garden!" and so forth.

This kind of chanting, with words suited to the occasion, appears to afford great delight to all the natives here, and is common to both Arabs, Nubians and Egyptians. If the

"How pleasant it is here in the garden, is it not?" p. 165.

tune is not very melodious, the *time* is always strictly kept, and the hand-clapping is as regular as a practised drummer's notes. When they had enjoyed this to their hearts' content, we told them to sing their hymn, "There is a happy land."

One exclaimed, just as they had ceased singing, "How pleasant it is here in the garden! is it not?"

"Yes," I answered; "but, O Saida, I know of a better place, where I shall go one day,—where the roses have no thorns," I added, looking at some who had scratched their hands in the attempt to get a few roses from the thorny bushes.

"Oh, my teacher, will you not take me with you there?" said the child; and several little voices echoed, "Take me!"

It made an opening for a little conversation about the land

> "Where fairer bowers than Eden's bloom,
> And never-withering flowers."

The young hearts were softened by innocent

happiness, and they listened willingly, and asked many questions.

"Oh, my teacher, you said we should have white robes there," exclaimed one bright little girl. "Will they not be always *clean?*"

I endeavoured to show her that the outward whiteness and purity, so often mentioned in "God's book" as belonging to the robes of the redeemed, were emblems of the purity of heart of those who can no more sin. This image is peculiarly pleasant and intelligible, we find, to the youngest and most ignorant. After a little more talk, it was thought time to retreat, lest our shady spot should be invaded; and, though but ten o'clock, it was already becoming very hot: so the veils were assumed and the carpets packed up, and the joyous party returned home.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TAMARISK-GROVE.

WHEN the weather became too hot to spend afternoons in the desert, or, indeed, to go out at all, except in the early morning, unless from absolute necessity, we used to make occasional excursions before breakfast, on donkeys, or else in a carriage on the road to a village near the site of old Heliopolis, with its famed obelisk, and a certain old tree venerated by all the Papists and native Christians as that under which the Virgin reposed in the "flight into Egypt."

Sometimes we took our coffee among the delicious orange-groves,—not exactly under the "Virgin's tree," but at a spot nearer the village, and more agreeable, though less fa-

mous. Here, at eight o'clock in the morning, a freshness was yet to be found in the air, enhanced by the little rills of water trickling among the orange-groves around us, as the water-works plied from a well close by; and the snowy blossoms perfumed the soft morning breeze with their fragrance, and were so abundant that we gathered handfuls without the owners expressing the least annoyance. But, pleasant as were these luxuriant gardens, it was not possible to get so far very often, on account of school, as it was desirable to be at home before ten o'clock. So we sometimes were content with a more humble place, which, if not so rich in verdure and shade as the favoured "City of the Sun," was yet a very agreeable spot for an early breakfast in hot weather. This was a grove of tamarisks, —not the stunted bushes we see by the coast in our northern climate, but tall, graceful trees, whose feathery foliage made a light shade on the yellow sand. On one side were barley-fields, and on the other the wide desert,

stretching away towards the red mountain: so that it was just on the boundary between cultivation and the wilderness.

The first time we came here it was about the second week in April, and the harvest was in full operation and made a very picturesque sight: it was between seven and eight in the morning, and already the reapers had almost finished their work; the camels were tied to the neighbouring trees in readiness to carry off the load; and while we sat drinking our coffee, in a shady spot, we had the amusement of seeing the whole process,—the patient animals laden with immense piles of grain (no need here to leave it to dry in shocks), the women carrying smaller bundles on their heads, and the gleaners then hastening to gather up the stray ears that remained.

About a week later, on coming to the same place with a friend, we found the scene quite changed: the reapers and gleaners had been succeeded by a large flock of sheep and goats, which were browsing on the leaves of the

thorny acacia, and picking up a few scattered ears which had even escaped the gleaner's eye: a little scanty grass grew here and there among the stubble, and was eagerly sought for by the great shaggy sheep. The older ones really resembled animated door-mats, and were very ugly; but the lambs, with jet-black head and throat and snow-white fleece, were pretty creatures. The goats were of two descriptions; one with long hair and hanging ears, which is graceful enough; the other, which is the commonest in the neighbourhood of Cairo, with short, smooth hair, of a fawn-colour, spotted with white, and a hooked nose and no horns. This last is not at all pretty; but the general effect of the mixed flock dispersed over the stubble-fields was pleasing, and our friend's children were, of course, in raptures with the lambs and kids, as children always are; but the sulky-looking shepherd who had charge of them was by no means pleased at our admiration. It seems that he feared the evil eye when he saw us

gazing with pleasure at his flock, admiration being supposed to imply *coveting*, and coveting to give the evil eye. What a base corner of the human heart such a superstition reveals! So the shepherd actually called his sheep and goats away to a more distant field, where we could see but "the uttermost part of them, and could not see them all."

Presently, a young girl who was strolling about, apparently without any thing to do, her morning labours being over, as it was now eight o'clock or more, came up to our party and saluted us good-humouredly, looking curious enough to see such unaccustomed visitors in her quiet grove. Our friend Mrs. R—— invited her to sit down beside us, and entered into conversation with her. She was an interesting-looking creature, though her features were not particularly handsome,—except her eyes, which were full of intelligence, and of a sort of olive-colour, which I never before saw in an Egyptian girl, black being the universal hue. Her complexion was darkened by ex-

posure to the sun to a much deeper brown than that of the inhabitants of the city, and made her white teeth look more brilliantly white by contrast. She might have been eighteen or more, to judge by her looks, but was, no doubt, at least three years younger. In the country the girls do not appear to be so early married as in the towns; for Zeynab (so she told us she was named) was unmarried still. Mrs. R—— read her a few passages out of her Arabic Testament; but so utterly fallow was the girl's mind, not only ignorant of every thing beyond the narrow round of material concerns in which she had been reared, but unused to think at all, that she found it better to talk than to read. The girl became interested: she had intelligence, and she listened and asked questions, and had, evidently, no desire to go away. When the children could no longer be kept from demanding their mother's attention, and she was obliged to leave her new pupil, instead of taking her departure, Zeynab came to sit beside me and

ask what I was doing. I was drawing. A picture of any kind was, of course, a complete novelty to her; but on being shown the trees, &c., and then told that these marks and colours were to represent them, she understood the object very readily, and watched the process with great satisfaction. I then called her attention to the beauty of the trees, and talked about gardens (every Egyptian delights in a garden beyond any thing else), and then related to her the story of the garden of Eden, and of Adam and Eve. When we came to the sentence of death, I asked where she thought she would go after she died. She opened her bright eyes very wide, and then, drooping the long black eyelashes over them and raising her hands with a gesture between uneasiness and indifference, replied, "Marafsheh!" (the common Egyptian contraction of the words meaning, "I do not know," or, "I know nothing of it.")

"You have a soul, Zeynab: it is not only

men who have souls; every child, every girl, has a soul."

"Yes, lady; I know it."

"Have you not heard that every soul must go either to heaven or to hell? Have you not heard of heaven and hell?"

"Yes: I know," she said, again.

"Well, when this is all become dust," (touching her arm,) "where do you think your soul will go?"

"Marafsheh," she repeated, very sadly, hanging down her head.

I then endeavoured to repeat what Mrs. R—— had been telling her of the plan of salvation; for, to a mind which has never been exercised on any unseen object and has always lived only for what is positively tangible, frequent repetition must be necessary before a totally new set of ideas can make any permanent impression.

Poor Zeynab had no want of intelligence by nature, and there was a curious, wistful expression in her face as she said, "Yes, the lady

told me; the lady said that. Oh, she is very good, that lady,—very nice! She told me much!"

"You Mohammedans are always afraid of death: is it not so?"

"Oh, yes, greatly afraid!" she echoed, shuddering, and contracting her features with terror at the very word. "And you are not afraid, nor that lady?"

"Those who trust in the Messiah, whom she told you of, need not fear death, because they will be very happy in heaven: it is good up there,—much better than here."

Zeynab remained silent for some minutes, with a puzzled, half-dreamy look in her eyes. Heaven was such a vague, unmeaning word to her!—how was it good?—what was it, to be so desirable? She could not take it in. Presently she noticed a ring I wore, and, with childish versatility, began expressing her delight and admiration. "I wish I had a ring like that! but I have none," she exclaimed.

"Well, Zeynab, in the place we were speak-

ing of they will wear golden crowns on their heads."

"What!" she cried, eagerly, as if she now caught a notion that she could comprehend, "what! gold like that?"

"Far more beautiful: and they wear robes of white."

"*All* white?" she asked, taking hold of her dirty blue cotton veil with rather a contemptuous air.

"Yes, white and clean and bright and beautiful, because their *hearts* are clean."

Her interest was now again fixed: instead of a vague, unreal, incomprehensible thing, she had a notion of some place which she could in a faint degree conceive; the outward glory, which was all the childish mind could yet seize hold of, was brought before her, and she was willing to converse about the love of God in providing a place of happiness for his children and to hear more of "Him the lady had talked about."

Mrs. R—— now rejoined us, and taught

the girl a short prayer, which she made her repeat several times, and which she promised to say every day. She parted from us with regret, and begged we would come again. Circumstances unfortunately prevented this for a long time; the hot winds had set in, and were so exhausting that it was impossible to do more than drag through the daily business of each day. One hindrance after another came, and when we did drive in that direction no Zeynab appeared, though we looked anxiously for her. At length, a very short time before our departure, we again made an expedition to the tamarisk-grove. It was too hot now to stay as late as we had done three weeks or a month before, and I feared that the poor girl was quite lost to us, not a creature being visible but an old woman with a very forbidding countenance, who was washing clothes at one of the trenches. But, while engaged in putting away the drawing-materials, in order to return home, I suddenly heard a voice speaking in joyful tones of greeting,

and, on looking round, Zeynab appeared, her bright eyes sparkling like two precious stones in her sunburnt face, as they peered out from the folds of her ragged veil. After a good deal of hand-kissing, and many expressions of welcome, she explained that she had been wishing much to see us again, and expressed great sorrow that "that lady" was not of the party to-day, and to hear that she had been ill. She said, "Every time I heard a carriage drive on that road, I ran to see; but no, always no; you were not there!" I asked if she remembered the little prayer. She said she had repeated it at first, but now had forgotten the words. I told them, and made her repeat them several times, shortening even that short sentence to suit her memory unused to learn. We had a little talk, and she seemed much interested and pleased.

In honour to an Egyptian girl, it should be told that neither on this nor on our first interview did Zeynab seem to have any idea of

getting money from the strangers, although evidently poor, and, in general, the village children and girls are all clamorous for money as soon as they see a European. I gave her, however, a piece of money at parting, saying I was going away, and wished, as I might never see her again, to give her a present. She drew back at first, and when she accepted it she said, in a deprecating manner, "I did not ask." This looked as if there was a good natural disposition in the poor girl.

She was recommended to our good matron, who we hoped might find her out and talk to her again; but illness, the increasing business of the school, and a variety of other circumstances combined, with the absence of both our friend and ourselves from Cairo, to prevent the tracing of poor Zeynab; and we know nothing more of her.

But there is *One* who does know, and whose eyes are in every place. The eye that never slumbers has been watching the young Egyptian on the borders of the desert, as surely as

if she were known to hundreds of her fellow-creatures. We cannot but hope that in some way she may yet be taught by his Holy Spirit, and learn to tremble no more when the name of death is mentioned.

CHAPTER XVI.

MOTHERS' MEETING IN CAIRO.

TO unite a few poor women in a Christian's house in the great Moslim city is a more important thing than might at first be supposed, and a far more difficult one than any one can imagine who has not closely studied Eastern customs or resided among Eastern women.

A few months before, it had seemed as far off as a castle in the air; but "straw upon straw the nest is built;" and, little by little, love and patience, aided by the grace of God, can soften prejudice, and make a little opening for the light where all was "confusion of darkness."

The means of reaching the poor women in

this place were, indeed, few and weak, compared to the machinery attainable in our cities at home, where we have a common language in which to converse, and where even the lowest have usually *some* idea, however imperfect, of what is meant by education and religion, though possessing never so little themselves. Here, among the Moslim women, it is like working on ground so long hardened by the sun as to resemble actual stone, and only after repeated efforts, the pickaxe having produced some little effect, it is shown to be clay, after all.

The habits and customs, so opposed to improvement, and the utter neglect from generation to generation, have produced a hardened insensibility towards any thing like change, and an aversion to mental effort of any kind, that makes it hard work at first; but, in time, repeated efforts and a judicious use of opportunities begin to tell; and then, when the outer surface is penetrated, the nature is found to be much the same in all essentials, whether the skin be white or brown.

And if there are greater difficulties in dealing with Moslim women than men, on account of their childishness and frivolity, there is one advantage, on the other hand, and that no small one: it is that an amount of Arabic which would be of little use among those capable of argument and reasoning will really go a good way with those whose ideas are so circumscribed that they must be dealt with as mere children. When we consider that they generally marry at twelve years old, we cannot wonder that they are always children.

It is impossible to dwell among these poor creatures, to watch their daily monotonous round of toil, their slovenly dress, the filth and discomfort of their homes, their frequent quarrels and vacant mirth, to see the wretched mismanagement of their little ones, and the degraded position they occupy with regard to the other sex, without wishing to raise them from a condition so little better than that of the beasts of burden. But it is when they are in affliction, when sorrow and bereavement call

forth feelings of a deeper nature, then it is that a Christian's heart is stirred within him.

It happened on the first night of our settling in Bab-el-Bahar that "about midnight" there was a "great cry;" for in a neighbouring house one was just dead. No one who has heard that sudden cry breaking the deep stillness of night can ever forget its thrilling effect. Then came the piteous wailing that seemed to speak of sorrow without hope: the mother of the family was taken, and the children's shrieks and sobs mingled with the plaintive cry of, "Oh, Aneeseh! Aneeseh!" from the sisters or friends who vainly called on her who could no longer answer them,—who had no longer a name on earth. "Where is she?" was the terrible thought—too terrible to dwell on, yet impossible to chase away—that forced itself into the mind of the Christian stranger who lay sadly listening to those sounds of woe and remembering the deep joy that mingles with the anguish of those who know that their beloved ones are forever with Lord. All that

could be answered to that awful question was, in the words of inspiration, he that knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. Next morning the mournful procession was seen leaving the door of a nearly opposite house; for in Egypt, as in all warm countries, funerals take place the day after decease at latest. There was the bier covered with a shawl, and the head-dress of the poor woman fixed upon it. As is usual, the hired mourning-women mixed with the friends and family; nor was it possible to distinguish them in this class of life, all being clad in the same dark-blue veils, and all wringing their hands with the same shrill, wailing cry; but of this we were unhappily but too sure, that in all the sad group not one had any real comfort, not one could call on the Almighty in the name of Him who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and ask for help and consolation for His sake who is the resurrection and the life, not one could say of the departed, "She is gone to Jesus!" Alas! she

never knew him! It is not useless pain to think of such a scene as this, if it stimulates us to fresh zeal in the cause of Christ. Through His mercy who does not disdain to use the feeblest instrumentality, there were (when the day of our leaving Cairo came, nearly seven months after this) a few, at least, who had heard the name of the Redeemer, and who knew that there was a holy book which told God's will to man,—a few who had some ideas beyond the dust in which they had grovelled so long,—and many who had learned to love instead of hating Christians, and had eaten their bread and salt, and wept bitterly at their departure.

It was, indeed, but a faint dawn-streak in that dark neighbourhood, and difficulties have multiplied and hindrances thickened since that day, so that it remains "the day of small things" still; but surely in due time we shall see the light brightening and spreading.

On a burning day in May did the first mothers' meeting in Cairo take place: to be

sure, the worst part of the heat was over, as we did not assemble till just before sunset; but an oppressive hot wind was still blowing when the guests began to arrive. The school-room had been swept neatly, and decorated with tamarisk-boughs and a few flowers, and a cloth was spread in the centre upon the mat, on which stood two large bowls of water and a quantity of native bread. The native Egyptian bread is a sort of *flap*, pliant and moist, like a cold pancake: it is always round and of a dusky colour, and, in fact, resembles the flat stones often found in the bed of rivers or in the desert. At a distance, a pile of bread might be taken for a pile of stones, and makes one think of the beautiful expression of Scripture, "If a son shall ask bread of one of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" Will he give the mockery of a good thing, instead of its reality? How much more will our heavenly Father give us, truly and literally, all that he has promised to them that ask him?

Our poor little scholars would gladly have come to join this festival, but the room would not admit it, nor would their noisy presence have been at all desirable; but many stood peeping to see their mothers enter. About fourteen mothers and aunts and grandmothers came to the meeting. It could not be conducted as a "tea" for mothers at home is; for the guests would not have touched the feast unless the hostess sat down and ate with them. Several were of the poorest class; a few were of a higher grade, as their dress showed: all met on equal and friendly terms,—though the contrast was rather strange, certainly. One or two were clad in silk jackets and covered with silver and coral, others in print trousers; but the majority wore the ordinary dark-blue cotton, trailing yet scanty garments. A Copt, the mother of the pretty Hynehna, came in a dazzling jonquil-coloured vest with long, narrow skirts, a head-kerchief of the same, and a quantity of gold coins round her thin, brown throat. Her bigoted, narrow mind

peeped out in the critical way in which she scanned her poor neighbours in their coarse veils, though she saluted them civilly enough.

Hasna, the maker of fuel, who lived next door to us, was of the party, though not a "mother of any scholar." Shoh and Fatmeh were at once guests and waiters, the company not liking the attendance of our man-servant, of course, as they had all laid their face-veils aside. Our friend Mrs. R—— came to join the circle; and, when all had taken their places on the mat round the cloth, the dishes were brought from the kitchen. They consisted of native messes, as palatable to the good women there as tea, cake and bread-and-butter are to us: gourds stuffed with rice and a little meat; stewed tomatoes and egg-plants; cabbage-leaves filled with rice and onions and meat and rolled up in balls; and piles of rice boiled with semn, or clarified butter, of a rather strong flavour. This sounds more elaborate than our feasts do; but the expense was really very trifling, and the trouble and

time of preparation only gave pleasure; for two of the younger women had volunteered to assist the cook, and had, apparently, spent a happy day in chopping and peeling and scooping, in spite of the great heat! Grace was said by our matron,—probably a novel idea to the guests; but Eastern good-breeding always prevented any surprise from being shown at what they did not expect. The fingers were soon at work; but truth compels me to say that, on the whole, the manners at table (if such a term may be used when no table is present) were better than one has seen where knives and forks were used. Only one hand was dipped into the dish, and the stuffed gourds, &c. were easily taken without much soiling of the fingers. Each went to the door where the apparatus used for pouring water on the hands stood, and washed after eating. With people of higher condition, a servant hands this round, and pours water for the guests.

The feast occupied altogether a much shorter

time than feasts of the kind with us. The women then gathered in little knots round their Christian friends, and listened and talked while coffee was served as a finish to the entertainment, and one which Eastern guests highly enjoy.

The party was diminished by degrees, as some who had babies with them, or who lived a couple of streets off, which to their notions was "a distance," were anxious to return early; the others sat by our friend Mrs. R——, who read aloud a portion of Scripture, explaining and commenting in a manner suited to her audience. Some of the school-children had slipped in, profiting by the dusk, and now were permitted to remain when rendered visible by the lighting of candles. One crept round to my side, and, sitting at my feet, put her arms on my knees with an entreating, loving look, that was quite irresistible.

The Turkish embroideress, Sitt Haanem, who was possessed of more education than any of the other mothers, as she knew

how to read in her own language,—though, perhaps, only imperfectly,—engaged in an interesting discussion when the reading was finished, and asked many questions of Mrs. R——, especially respecting the divinity of Christ. The Coptic dame in the yellow dress did not quite like that Moslims should get any instruction, and would, I fear, have regretted their conversion to Christianity, instead of rejoicing in it. She frequently interrupted the conversation by turning round and saying, in a loud whisper, "She is a Moslim; the lady need not talk to her. Moslims know nothing of all that; they do not believe in Christ."

Sitt Haanem looked annoyed, but did not make any remark, except to beg her friend to continue what she was saying. At last the Copt, showing her arm, on which a cross, olive-wreath and other symbols were tattooed in blue, said, with an air of intense pride and self-righteousness, "I am a pilgrim; I have been to Jerusalem; see there!" and her look added, unmistakably, "That woman is not

worthy to be talked to at the same time with a holy creature like me!"

"My dear woman, God looks at the heart, and not at the arm," I replied, in a whisper, —which answer, if it did not satisfy her, silenced her for the time.

Our little meeting concluded with a prayer, in which our good matron fervently asked for the divine blessing on those who had already left, and those who were present, as well as on the children. They listened reverently; and some murmured assents were heard during the prayer, as if the hearers joined as far as they could.

The last batch of guests departed, as the others had done, with many expressions of affection and regret at our departure, kissing our hands and cheeks again and again, and several shedding tears as they repeated, "The Lord preserve thee! The Lord bless thee!" And these were the women who half a year before looked on all Christians with dislike and suspicion, if not with actual aversion!

Perhaps some will say, "Is this all?" It is little, indeed; but we must remember that sowing and reaping do not follow immediately upon one another, except in very rare cases. Patient waiting for the early and latter rain of the Spirit is usually part of every missionary attempt, whether at home or abroad. How many years of waiting have many Christian parents endured before they could see in their own children any fruits of a long and careful training in the truth of God! And these poor Moslim women are steeped in ignorance and superstition from early childhood, and surrounded by bad influences on every side.

Surely we must have great patience with them, and thank God for even the smallest step towards better things. Even a *wish* for something beyond the daily objects of life is a matter of thankfulness; and this we have perceived in more cases than one.

In a conversation with Fatmeh, the young mother who had lost three little boys, she observed (after listening to what I said about

heaven), "Yes, it is better there than here; for here there is *plenty* of sorrow."

Oh, may God grant that, ere long, there may be many poor Moslims who have learned that there is a better land, where sorrow cannot enter! They soon learn, as we all do, that there is *plenty of sorrow* on earth; but let us, who have been blessed with the knowledge of the gospel of Christ, try to show them that it will indeed be better there than here.

CHAPTER XVII.

RAGGED SCHOOL REOPENED.

THOUGH it was but for a few months that the little ragged school in Bab-el-Bahar was closed, the desolate appearance of the room upon my return made it look as if it had been deserted for a much longer period. It had been no one's business to look after it particularly, and the poor little school-room was bare and dirty when I came to take possession again, in the month of November, 1862. No texts or pictures, as of old, hung against the walls; nothing but dust and a few torn books remained. However, it is better to look forward than to look back; and, having caught a little well-known child at the door, and despatched her to look for the

former scholars, and tell them "School was open," I went up-stairs to get some books and pictures which were stored away there, and then began to sweep the dusty room while awaiting the return of the maid, who was gone to fetch work-materials; and the arrival of the new matron, who, like all Egyptians, was behind time. She was merely engaged to help in keeping order, cleaning the school-room, &c., and instructing the scholars in plain sewing, and was by no means to be a school-mistress, being quite uneducated. No native teacher or assistant could be obtained, though I was in treaty for one: so that I was quite alone. The prospect did not look very brilliant; but help comes usually in one way or another in time of need. The first helper was a poor washerwoman, who, finding her former employer alone in the house, expressed much surprise and pleasure at the meeting, and, taking the broom almost by force from her hands, exclaimed, "Sit down, lady, and I will sweep the room for you." She had scarcely

finished when little voices were heard on the stairs, and there was a rush of scholars, chiefly old ones, but accompanied by a few others (their younger sisters), all tumultuous in their greetings; twenty pairs of little henna-dyed hands were eagerly held out, with deafening shouts of "Welcome! welcome, teacher! Our teacher is come back! God be praised!" After some time had been occupied in salutations and inquiries and recognitions, the affectionate but somewhat unruly little creatures were at length arranged in a row on the mat, while I said a few words to them, explaining that as yet there was no teacher except myself (for the only matron I could procure did not know her letters), and that I could only read Arabic very slowly and imperfectly, but that I would do my best, and would study every evening, so as to know more; and on their part they must be good and obedient and learn very nicely: which, of course, was promised readily enough, —for children are always ready to promise. After a short prayer, and a portion of the

gospel read and explained, they were set down to their alphabet and spelling-cards; for though some had been formerly for several months at school, they had forgotten in the interval, or else had made little progress, so that none could read except two,—and they with great difficulty, and only spelling each word as they went. While the children were thus engaged, in burst our old acquaintance, Shoh, with her baby in her arms, and her old mother behind her to witness the introduction. The little creature had been washed and "got up" for the occasion, as this was a formal introduction (the day before I had seen her with it, while passing in the street, and had been most affectionately greeted, but regret to say I could not then pass judgment on the infant's charms, because they were obscured by dirt): now it really looked a very pretty baby-girl, about five months old, and I could answer satisfactorily to the young mother's questions of "Is she not sweet—sweet? Is she not very nice?" I confess poor Shoh reminded one strongly of

a little English girl with a new doll,—though she must have been fifteen or sixteen at least by this time: she kept repeating, exactly as children do over their new waxen treasure which grandmamma or auntie has just brought from the toy-shop, "Only see its eyes!—look! here are its feet!—and just touch its hair,—is not that like silk?—so soft!" Then the old grandmother, who seemed on pleasanter terms than formerly with her daughter, seized the baby, and hoisted it up on high, as if in triumph, apostrophizing it in a very droll manner, and saying, "Now, Hosna" (which was its name, and signifies "handsome," or "what is approved"), "that is thy lady, thy own lady: thou must love her, Hosna, very much: look, sweet one!" and then, turning to me, she called for a confirmation of her assertions that Hosna was "lovely and precious." I was pleased that so much pride as well as affection should be poured out on a girl, because the contrary is sometimes the case in the East,—though perhaps more in theory than

practice, as I constantly observe the men of the lower class caressing their little girls with the utmost tenderness. Many other poor visitors came in the course of this and the following day, all giving me the most cordial welcome, and some, whose names I could not recollect, appearing to remember me quite well.

Keeping a ragged school is not a sinecure in any country, as everybody knows who has tried it; and of course it is more difficult where the language is imperfect, and where there is no aid, such as in a long-established school can always be obtained, from a monitress or pupil-teacher of some sort. The first day or two it seemed impossible to keep the little voices quiet for a moment: there were no habits of order or obedience, and each wished to do what was good in her own eyes. "Teacher! Zanuba is beating me." "Teacher! Sittaty is pinching my arm." "Oh, teacher! Fatmeh pushed me down; pray beat her." "I cannot get an alphabet; they have taken

mine away. "Hear my spelling, teacher; I can say it very nicely." "No, don't hear her, teacher; hear me first." "Look at Adeela, teacher; she is striking my sister: I will not have my sister struck." "She tore the book, and ought to be beaten." "Oh, teacher, do something to my finger; it is so bad!" Then, when one after another all had been attended to, a fit of joy succeeded the fit of quarrelling, and two or three would fling down the cards and exclaim, "I am so glad you are come again! I love you much!" "Then show me your love by being good and quiet," was the reply. "I must have order." "Yes, yes; order! order!" echoes a lively, officious little lass of ten or eleven, snatching up a ruler and laying about her vigorously, crying, "Order, order, you children! Stand in order!" When the stick is taken from her, and the little ones, whom she has tapped so violently as to make them cry, are pacified, another trouble begins: —the idle ones fancy they are hungry, and out of some pocket in their ragged garments

come a green onion, a piece of sticky date-paste, a pickled turnip, or a bit of sugarcane, which have to be confiscated till "recess," and with some difficulty the disorderly crew are induced to wait till the hour of noon is struck from the neighbouring mosque.

In the afternoon (after about an hour's rest) the little flock reassembled: some who lived close by had gone home to dinner, others brought bread with some little relish, and others claimed the five-para pieces they had given me to keep (about the value of half a cent), with which they bought a morsel of native cheese or a few dates from a shop near the school-house, and ate them while seated in a circle on a mat in the school-room. Some of the poorest had at times only bread; but I think this was exceptional, as vegetables and other native articles are so very cheap that it is rare for any family not to be able to afford a scrap of pickle, or a handful of raw carrots, radishes, &c., to accompany the bread. Meat was, I believe, hardly ever tasted by them,

except on extraordinary occasions, and they never seemed to get any warm food. Possibly at sunset a poor family would sometimes have lentil soup, as the boatmen so generally do; but during the short period of cold the children often came shivering to school in the morning, and were very thankful for a few spoonfuls of hot milk-and-water, or the remains of their teacher's coffee diluted and sweetened with coarse sugar. A degree of cold which is not in itself intense is much felt by those accustomed to such heat most of the year, and usually very scantily clothed.

In the course of about six weeks I was obliged to change the matron for another, who, though equally uneducated, was not so much addicted to forsaking her daily duty in the work-room, and who did not waste so much time over her long cherry-stick pipe. I cannot say she never smoked when she should have been cutting out needlework, &c., or never made a pretext of going to church when a visit to her sister's, to gossip and eat

nuts and almonds, was the second and longest part of the ceremony; but still she did much better than her predecessor in many respects. I arranged afterwards with a native embroideress to come daily and instruct part of the scholars in this popular, because lucrative, employment. They made a pretty picture, in spite of the rags of so many, when seated in little groups over the embroidery-frames,—the Coptic girl who taught them leaning over each set in turn, her net veil twisted gracefully across her shoulders, and a heap of bright-coloured skeins of silk beside her, and all the circle looking so cheerful and contented; nor was the sight less pleasing from the contrast of what had been the daily life of these poor children before they were gathered within the walls of their school.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VISITS TO THE LANES AND FIELDS.

IN a kind of court, partly open to the sky and partly roofed over, lived the mothers of two or three of my scholars; and into this court I penetrated one day, guided by one of the girls, in order to inquire for the truants and at the same time to try and make acquaintance with their families. Several women were assembled near the door of one of the dirty, ruined-looking abodes opening into the court, one crouching over a pot of charcoal and sticks burning before her, apparently destined for some sort of cookery, and two others employed in making bread, the dough being in a half-liquid state in a huge pan, while one woman kept adding water every few minutes

"Two more stood at the doorway with their babies, looking on."
p. 207.

from a bowl near her; two more stood at the doorway with their babies, looking on and talking. The first, I found, was the mother of a very poor and ill-fed-looking girl who attended school but was very irregular. "Are you Melaky's mother?" I asked, after the usual salutations. "Yes." "I wish, my dear woman," I continued, "you would send her every day; she would learn better: she knows nothing as yet, because she never comes two days together." "I am sick, lady," replied the poor creature, sorrowfully: "I must keep Melaky often to do things for me." The other woman now began to relate that she had a bad leg,—indeed, two bad legs, only one was the worst,—and, as is usual in all such cases, to insist on showing it to me. The sufferer appeared gratified by my expressions of pity; and though the alleviation I suggested, of *clean* bandages dipped into *clean* cold water and wrung, seemed to her a very singular one, she actually promised to give it a trial. After she had talked as much as she wished about

her leg, I tried to draw the conversation to something cheering, saying, "You have indeed much to suffer here on earth: every one has, one time or another, to suffer;—is it not so?—if not in the leg, it is in the arm or in the head; or else we have sorrow in the heart." "Ah!" observed another, who had just joined the group, "in our thoughts we have trouble," nodding significantly as she spoke. "True: therefore we should wish much to be in the beautiful land above, where no pain or sorrow can come," I continued. "That is with the Lord," said the sick woman, with a half-wistful, half-despairing look, that seemed to say, "If it were not so vague a hope, it might be good for something." I told her how in God's book, called the Bible, we learned about that blessed country, and how to reach it by believing in God, and how his commands were all written in this book for us. I added that to teach the children to read of these things was the chief reason I had for wishing them to come to school, and that, though sewing

was also good, it was far better to know God's commands. These, to us self-evident truths, were to them new ideas. It is necessary to bear in mind, in dealing with those poor ignorant women, that their minds are as undeveloped as if they were children of five years old; and, indeed, most children younger than five years, who have had any pains taken with them, are in a more advanced state of intellect. They received the seeming truism as something new but good, and all agreed that it was true; and one said, "The children love you: they are glad you are come back."

Another asked, "From what country do you come? Are you from Constantinople, or from Spain?" An old acquaintance rather tartly corrected her, saying, "Do you not know the lady is English?" The little girl now came down a ladder, with a basket of rubbish and straw on her head, and seemed pleased to find her teacher paying her poor sick mother a visit, and she promised to come when she could: with much partial attendance from the

older children we must be content, as they are too useful to be daily spared, unless the parents really desire their improvement.

I found that, by degrees, I could extend my visits to some of the other lanes besides Abon-bakr (which is close to the school-house). Provided I kept to our own quarter, I was now well enough known to be safe even among nothing but Moslims and with no protector beyond a young scholar. Except from little children (and these only on going into a lane not previously visited), I never was assailed with bad language or angry looks. On the contrary, the artisans would often look up, smiling good-naturedly, and say, "There goes the teacher;" and one day, when I was picking my steps over the stones and rubbish which nearly blocked up a narrow lane, followed by some four or five little, ragged, merry girls, a carpenter who was at work there called out to his child, saying, "Saida, go directly with thy teacher! lazy thing!" (for she was rolling in the dust not far off.) I told him I was trying

to collect my stray lambs. "Yes, yes," said the man; "you are the shepherd, and these are the lambs." How this observation made one think of the great Shepherd of the sheep, to whom all true Christian teachers are striving to lead their little flocks!

One day, going to see a sick woman, I came to a lane a little way to the north of Abonbakr: the invalid was gone out, having been less ill than had been represented, or having amended rapidly. Some women were sifting flour in the yard, their scanty blue robes tucked round them and their arms bared; they were vigorously shaking the flour in sieves, which retained the coarsest part of the bran, while an old woman sat behind, watching the process, and some others were engaged in sewing and nursing their babies. I saluted them, and said I had called to visit Fatmeh, but heard she was out; upon which they begged me to sit down with them; but these courts are frequently wet in the winter (in hot weather they dry up quickly), and the ground

was so muddy that the only way I could comply with the invitation was by stooping down as they do themselves,—which was no hardship, as I was used to it. But, with the politeness which seems inherent in the poorest and lowest among Orientals, one of them rose at once and fetched an old box-lid, on which she spread a blue cotton veil and made a seat of it for her visitor; while Shoh, who had accompanied me, observed, rather triumphantly, "She is not proud, and likes the earth!" Shoh was always anxious that her friend should be well received, and seemed really glad that others should be spoken to on the subjects which had so frequently been brought before herself. These poor women asked many questions about the school; and in the course of conversation, as we were speaking of prayer, I began to repeat the Lord's prayer, and was pleased to find that Shoh knew it. She had never been regularly taught to say it, but had often come into school at prayer-time, and, being quick, had learned to repeat it. She

sat, or rather squatted, beside me, with her pretty, black-eyed baby on her knee, looking quite pleased while I repeated, and endeavoured to explain, a short Scripture story. The others seemed also interested, and twice when I rose to depart I was compelled to remain.

Now, it is a point of good manners in the East always to beg a visitor to stay and not be in a hurry to go, though she may have stayed till her weary hostess is secretly thankful for her departure. But among the poor, who do not conceal their feelings,—at least, as far as their expression of face goes,—it is not difficult to see when they are really anxious for a visitor to stay or are merely repeating formal sentences.

The old dame who sat in the door-way was very anxious to know why any one should live, as it seemed to her, so lonely a life, away from one's country and kindred, and put some searching questions which were not easy to answer; but Shoh did not leave me time to

frame replies; for she assured the old woman that "her lady" loved the poor in Cairo, and also the children; "and my Hosna is her child," she added, pulling my dress and appealing to me for a confirmation of her assertion. "If you love the poor, you will go to paradise," observed one of the others; "for your heart is white." "I hope indeed to go there, my sister," I replied, "but not for that reason; all our hearts are sinful,—they are not white, but, on the contrary, black, until God sends his Holy Spirit to make them clean." I endeavoured to show her the necessity of praying for the Spirit, and showed how the school-children were taught to pray, &c. One woman promised to send her little daughter (who has since become a regular attendant,—at least, she was one when I left Cairo); and another said her child was too young, but it should come when it could walk and speak.

When time permitted, I occasionally made visits to the country villages outside the city;

and, had circumstances enabled them to be more frequent, I could have found plenty of employment, as the country-women are even more ready than those of the town to receive a visitor; for in their monotonous life it is quite an event. In winter, the short days prevent any distant rides from being feasible by those whose forenoons are occupied; but when spring had fairly set in, and the days were long enough to give plenty of time, the country became truly delightful. The low lands, which in autumn and even in the early part of the winter had been wet and unwholesome, were then dry and healthy, and the brilliant verdure redeemed the flat meadows in a great degree from the charge of tameness. The clumps of palm-trees almost supplied the place of elevations in the ground, and the exquisite green of the clover and young corn, the luxuriance of the gardens, whose orange-trees were laden with bloom and scented the air, made a country ride, at this season, very agreeable. The barley was

in full ear, and a shade of yellow was spreading over some of the fields, though the wheat was still green, when I rode out with a friend to visit a little hamlet about half a mile from the railway to Alexandria. Like all Egyptian villages, it was dirty and comfortless in the extreme, and would have looked very dreary if seen under the leaden skies so common in our cloudy islands; but the golden sunshine and transparent atmosphere of Egypt have the effect of making things look their best,—like a cheerful, happy temper in untoward circumstances.

Outside the foremost group of mud huts a party of women were sitting and standing, having, as is their custom, finished their daily labour early in the morning, so as to have the heat of the day for rest. A number of children, as dirty as possible and very ragged, though not looking by any means ill fed, were rolling in the dust,—the poor little babies covered with flies in swarms, which their mothers did not attempt to drive away.

I was civilly invited to sit down and rest, and asked if I came from the city. On being answered in the affirmative, they said it must be hot there, and that it was good to come out to breathe the air. (The common expression in the East for going out, either to walk or drive, is, "I wish to breathe the air.") After a little chat, I produced a small book, which was looked at with curiosity, and some asked if it was really Arabic, for they are very suspicious of evil in European books: as none of the party could read, they had to take my word that it was in their own language; and, to prove it the better, I offered to read some of it to them. Two pretty, bright-looking, but saucy young girls, who were squatted close beside me, interrupted me often by laughing and making irreverent observations, which made it very hard to keep the thread of the narrative. (I was reading one of the miracles of Christ.) One old woman refused to hear to the end, and, saying, "I don't understand that kind of thing," shrugged up

her shoulders and walked off; but the rest stayed, and some appeared really interested. The mocking girls at last became quieter, and, when the story was finished, allowed me to ask questions and converse a little with the others. Meantime, one went into a neighbouring hut and fetched a very large, shallow earthen pan, which she proceeded to rinse and wash with more care than was common among her class. She then dived into the low entrance and disappeared, but returned presently, carrying the pan filled with milk, and, setting it down before me, said, "Drink, lady: it is sweet milk" (which is considered more of a luxury than the sour milk in ordinary use); "drink it all: it is for you." Of course I thanked her heartily for her kind hospitality; but how to accept it was a puzzling matter. The quantity seemed nearly enough to drown one, and the vessel was so enormously broad and shallow, in comparison to its size, that I could not help thinking of the old fable of the stork and the fox: indeed, I was in the

condition of the bird; for how to reach the milk I could not conceive. However, the good woman kept urging me to drink; and, as I knew that she had probably no cup (the people in the country often not possessing any crockery except the porous water-jars, thick sour milk being easily taken up with their bread out of the large vessels), I did not wish to hurt her feelings by refusing. With great difficulty, and at the imminent risk of spilling the whole over my dress, I contrived to lift the great pan, and (at least a dozen pairs of eyes watching with amusement to see how I should manage) a mouthful or two were swallowed, and I felt like a successful juggler who has performed a feat satisfactorily; but scarcely was the vessel safely replaced on the ground than my kind entertainer exclaimed, "Oh, you must take it all!—it is sweet milk, and you must drink all,—all!" I apologized, and made many excuses, but was compelled to repeat the operation a second time, and, I fear, was thought scarcely polite for leaving the half-gallon un-

consumed This was simply from hospitable feelings and a wish to do honour to a guest,—not that Egyptians are accustomed to eat and drink very largely themselves: on the contrary, they are generally very moderate, and the peasants especially live with great simplicity. After a little more talk, I took leave of my new acquaintance, who begged me to come and see them again.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE SCHOOL PROGRESSED.

THE cold weather had come, and was beginning to depart (for January was well advanced), without bringing me the expected teacher from Syria. Friends at home, little cognizant of the difficulty of getting any kind of suitable assistants, supposed, in every letter, that by this time a teacher had been found; but, in fact, the snow of Lebanon itself would have been more easily procured! The difficulty of inducing the few Protestant Syrians to leave their country for one less healthy to most of them, and more expensive to all, is naturally very great; and the American missionaries, who have laboured so long among them, can scarcely, perhaps, be expected rea-

dily to part with the pupils they have taken such pains to train, especially as they have still more demand than supply for their own schools, and, moreover, are not, generally, at all sanguine about any work among Moslims. I remained, therefore, sole teacher, as well as superintendent, from the opening of school in the end of November till the last week in January, except an occasional relief of a couple of hours from an elderly Syrian lady, who, though unused to keeping a school, and only possessed of a very limited education, yet kindly did her best to teach a little reading and Scripture when I was laid by with a cold and needed a little rest very much. But casual help of so irregular a kind, and which could never be reckoned on, made no great difference in the responsibility of the work; and the constant attention required prevented the possibility of visiting among the mothers as frequently as I could have wished, or trying to assemble them for a meeting.

The Arabian proverb, "Patience is the key

to glory," often comes into one's mind in the midst of the incessant little disappointments about promising children, and all the small hindrances and troubles, which are common to all school-teachers, but which, of course, are increased in a foreign country, where the language is not fully understood and the habits and ways of the people are different from our own. Still better, indeed, is the warning of Scripture, "In patience possess ye your souls." I select a few notes, made at the time, which may interest Sunday-school teachers and others who like to watch the training of the young:—

"*Dec. 1862.*—My children were very troublesome this morning. Scandara was in one of her fickle moods, and alternately teased and diverted the others. She had got, by way of a veil, a piece of coarse English muslin, not nearly so pretty as her usual one; but she was very vain of it, as a novelty, and kept simpering and tittering and pretending to be a bride, till the rest of the girls were

unable to attend to a word of their lessons. When she was quieted,—with much ado,—I got them in order while I read the portion of Scripture; but so limited is the vocabulary of the lowest class in Cairo that it is necessary for me to translate at least two words in every twenty lines into equivalents, as far as my limited knowledge permits. These children do not seem to know of any word but 'stone' for rock,—though their rich language has a great many, I believe. They appear, in fact, to make a few words do the part of a maid-of-all-work, as the uneducated in all countries are very apt to do,—as, for example, the vulgar Italians' using one word for a boat, a carriage and a box. I hope soon, however, to use the new edition of the Gospels, which is said to be much easier for the people than the old.

"Another difficulty is the changing attendance: with the exception of a few, and those chiefly younger ones, most of the children come on alternate days, or come two and then stay away one: so that to pick up the threads

of each, and remember where she is and what she has been learning, is not always easy.

"They all agree in being affectionate, whether good or bad in other respects. Sekeeneh is, perhaps, an exception, being such a covetous, selfish child; but I do not think there is another. Seeing my head tied up on account of a cold, this morning, they were full of sympathy; and several said, coaxingly, 'May not I kiss thee to-day, because thou hast pain?' while others greeted me with little pats on the back and shoulders, repeating, 'Dear teacher! Never mind, never mind!' Which expression, as well as the patting, is used to denote sympathy and consolation to any one in pain, either of mind or body."

"Werdeh has come again to school, after a few days' absence; and I hardly know whether to be glad or sorry. She is a great 'lump of a girl,' as people would say in Ireland; looking about fourteen, but probably two years less,—as self-willed and proud as any grown woman, and yet as childish as a baby. She

cries and whimpers in the most ridiculous way if thwarted; begged hard one day for a small doll which I had given to a young child, saying, 'Give me the bride; I want the bride'; (a doll is generally so called in this country;) and yet she domineers over the others, if my eye is off for a couple of minutes, and assumes the airs of a superior. The matron hates her, and begged me to forbid her the school, as she will never learn to read, seeing she cannot be kept quiet five minutes with the card in her hand, but must ever be jumping up to beat or pinch some one, or to give me advice as to the management of the school. I do not choose to turn any one away, however, and the poor girl, with all her faults, seems affectionate,—at least to her teacher. Her habit of using bad language is the worst trouble, because I cannot always detect it, of course, and I am sometimes grieved, in the midst of a lesson, to hear one call out, 'Teacher, Werdeh is cursing my mother! and she curses so-and-so's father!' It is not easy to punish such a big pupil. The

little ones I make stand behind the door with face turned to the wall, for trifling misdemeanours, and find it always a very efficacious punishment.

"The other day we had a curious request from a poor man,—I suppose a neighbour,—who came shouting under the window for the teacher, and when I looked out to see what he wanted, found that his little girl had been naughty: how, he did not explain to my comprehension exactly; but his desire was that I should bring her in and beat her. It was out of school-hours. I told him that in school we did not use a stick for the girls, but that they must stand with their face to the wall if they were naughty,—which he seemed to think very droll: however, he went away when he found I would not inflict the beating.

"Several of the young ones are like kittens for mirth and spirit, and can hardly be kept out of mischief for a minute; but I would rather have them mischievous and merry than dull and stupid. They are dear little things,

and their pretty black eyes dance with glee when they are full of fun, so that I love to see them. But I sadly want a monitress or pupil-teacher: my former assistant, Mennee, though so young, and not very bright, would be a great comfort. As to making one of these untaught young Moslims, or even one of the few Coptic girls, into a monitress, I find that will not answer as yet. After they have been a few months at school, I may try it again; but at present the attempt usually fails, because the monitress will persist in beating the scholars under her, and they, on their part, decline obeying an equal unless she does beat them. This morning they all with one consent began repeating their text so profanely, in imitation of two little Copts (who are much worse in this respect than Moslims), that a general laughing ensued, and I was obliged, as soon as I could gain a hearing, to speak very seriously about it. 'Listen, children. You know I do not beat. My cane is only a reed to point with, and cannot beat:

but therefore you must obey my voice: do you understand?' 'Yes, teacher.' 'Very well. Now, God's words—the words of his book—are holy, and must be said slowly and softly, thus . . . ., and not screamed, as you did this morning. God hears you, remember. He is great, and we are small; he is holy, and we are sinners: so we must speak softly when we say the words of his book.' They now all repeated, in soft, gentle tones, 'There is One God and One Mediator,' &c.; and all looked pleased when I praised them. Praise is, indeed, as much valued by these little children as by other little ones, if not more." * * *

"I had to take the school into a sort of passage or corridor to-day, because some one had broken the windows of the school-room, and the glazier had selected that hour to mend them, instead of coming in the afternoon of the previous day, according to my request. It was hard work to teach in so confined a place; for no child liked to give way, and one nudged and another knocked, and the incessant cry

was, 'She pinched me!' followed by a howl from the injured one and peals of laughter from the rest. Heneyna played every imaginable monkey-trick, and when sent to the corner pretended to hide her face and cry, while grinning through the chinks of her ragged blue veil: so that it was impossible to keep one's countenance. When the glazier's work was done, instead of going away, he stood looking at the pictures, and took a card in his hand, and really seemed as if he would gladly have been a scholar himself. I asked if he had any little girls, and he said, sorrowfully, 'I had one once, but she is dead.'

"Fatmeh, Shoh's sister, had not been to see me for a long time, and her last two visits were, I grieve to say, evidently made on mercenary motives. She is an amiable, quiet-tempered creature, but weak and changeable, and very inferior in intelligence to Shoh, who, though not good-tempered, is capable, I think, of stronger affection.

"The desire for approbation is very amusing

sometimes, in my little flock, by the manner with which they ask for it: as, for instance, 'Am I not good to-day, teacher? Am I not quite *nice?*' or, 'Teacher, you love me because I am good—don't you? *Say* I am good!' 'Is my work very pretty?' lisps a little creature of five years old, with a bit of rag pulled over her forefinger, its original hue disguised by dirt and what workwomen call 'mauling,' and with stitches half an inch long. This self-praise, as well as the constant demand for approbation, needed frequent checking, of course; and one day, when explaining the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, of which I had a picture on the wall, I tried to show them the sin of pride and boasting, saying that God did not like people who praised themselves, but that the Publican was right because he was humble, &c. Next morning, two or three children began, as usual, vaunting themselves for their supposed merits,—when a little Copt girl, in many respects a very good child, but particularly addicted to this habit, called out

from the corner where she was sitting with her spelling-card, 'Sitti, I am very bad!' (in a tone of triumph and exultation difficult to describe); 'I am good for nothing! I am a *pig!!*' At which climax, I confess, the dignity of the teacher gave way, and she fairly burst out laughing. The 'pride that apes humility' was certainly exhibited to perfection, as she repeated, 'I am not a *Pharisee;* I am good for nothing! I am a pig!!'"

"*January, 1863.*—Reopened school this month. After the Christmas holidays, which had lasted a fortnight, I had had a severe cold, and, having no one to take my place in school, I was obliged to dismiss school for that period and go for change of air to the country. I found the fatigue of so many hours' incessant teaching too much to continue, especially as a matron who has never been accustomed to any kind of school can afford but very partial aid, even in keeping order, and not unfrequently leaves the sewing upon my hands in addition to the rest. The missionary to the Moslims

kindly gave me a little temporary help in reading and catechizing in Scripture, two or three times, justly considering that, as they were chiefly Moslim children, an hour thus spent was not lost to his peculiar business. But I wanted daily and more mechanical assistance; and at length, at the very end of the month, a young person was recommended to me, who could teach the routine of spelling and reading, and who, though unused to a school, seemed so intelligent and docile that there was every hope she would improve rapidly; and her first week proved very satisfactory, on the whole. Teresa is of mixed Italian and Syrian extraction, though born in Cairo, and a member of one of the Oriental Churches, and not, therefore, to be trusted with any religious instruction; but she is perfectly aware that she is not to interfere in this, and is so far from being bigoted that she is ready to read and listen to the gospel for herself. Her assistance spares my voice greatly,—though, being only mechanical aid,

her own education being so limited, the same constant superintendence is necessary as before, at least as yet; but she is far beyond the poor old matron in sense, &c.; and if she were a Protestant, I would by degrees train her into a nice teacher."

The fast of Ramadan, which began the third week in February, had the effect of thinning our numbers for a time, considerably, as all but quite the young ones fast, and therefore are unfit for any exertion in the daytime,—the Moslim fast implying abstinence from water, as well as food, from sunrise to sunset. But when that weary month was over the children soon flocked back to school, and their numbers varied between twenty and thirty, and latterly there was a decided increase. Something of order and manners had, ere that time been established: some steady scholars could spell, and were beginning to read; and the greater part, who were not steady in attendance and consequently could not read, yet could repeat several texts of Scripture, and

also the first answers in a brief catechism which had been prepared for their use; and all, except new-comers, could tell the meaning of several Scripture pictures. It is true that a stranger might easily overrate the order and tranquillity of the children, for the presence of a foreign visitor naturally awed them into unusual stillness and propriety of demeanour; and an English gentleman, who honoured the school with a visit one day, remarked that they seemed "a very quiet, orderly set," which, had he seen them ten minutes before, he certainly could not have said. But considering the circumstances, and that these were chiefly Moslim girls of the lowest class, and that more than half had never been to any sort of school till a few months before, we had no reason to be discouraged, but rather much cause for thankfulness.

Shoh frequently came in to listen while I taught Scripture in school; and one day, when the missionary had called and was assisting me by reading to the elder children the his-

tory of the Crucifixion, Shoh, with her baby on her lap, seated herself on the ground to listen. When we stopped, I asked her if she knew why Jesus Christ suffered this death on the cross. "It was for our sakes," replied Shoh, without hesitation,—"for our sins,—to save us." Now, I do not say this poor child-woman is a Christian: God only knows how far the knowledge, small as it is, which she has received, has sunk into her heart,—whether the intellect is stirred without the soul having taken the impression, or if there is light in the soul, so faint that his all-seeing eye can alone be sure of its presence; but she does know that Christ died for sinners: she may never throw off the outward yoke of Islam, and yet by degrees may come nearer and nearer to Him whom she now sees afar off. We must pray and wait, in her case, as in so many others.

It is a comfort to see habits of cleanliness beginning to make a little way,—though I fear it will be some time yet before they will pene-

trate into the homes, and that clean hands and faces are only looked on as a "school-dress:" still, even that is a point gained. I observe the older girls seldom now come with dirty faces, and those who have been some time in school are vigorous assistants in purifying new-comers, some of whom really look as if a hoe would be required before soap and water could produce any effect. It is rather amusing to see the pride shown by old scholars in introducing a new child, who generally comes up the steps with a half-frightened look, as if fearing to be beaten, and yet half laughing at the encouragements of the others who surround her, patting her on the back, saying, "Don't be afraid: the teacher is good." Then one calls out her name:—"Sitti, here is a new girl: she is called Fatmeh, or Hosna, or So-and-so." Another exhorts her officiously to kiss the teacher's hand; and then, while she stands undecided whether to laugh or cry at the door, scarcely able to listen to the kind words which her teacher addresses to her, be-

cause so many voices are speaking round her, the state of her face and hands is perceived, and, with some coaxing, she is induced to undergo the ablutions, of which she cannot see the advantage,—poor little thing! To go to the bath once in a very long time is a treat to any Egyptian child (and we may venture to remark that in this they are better off than some in our great cities, who never do get even a yearly scouring); but the idea of daily cleanliness is, of course, a complete novelty, and, at first, distasteful. The victim is seized by two school-fellows, and made to stoop down while they scrub her cheeks and hands, and sometimes get the soap into her eyes, till she cries for mercy; but when the operation is over, and her brown skin shines with rubbing, she is again patted on the back and neck, and comforted with the cheering assurance that she is now "quite pretty,—quite nice,—very clean," and takes her place tolerably content.

Hair is a much more difficult matter than hands and faces, as the foolish custom of [illegible]

ing it in long and numerous tails, which are only undone at rare intervals, renders cleanliness scarcely possible: the more respectable persons undo the plaits once a week, and we endeavour to get the children to keep to this plan, which is the best attainable at present; the poorest, if left to themselves, would think two or three times a year often enough. The very little girls, however, cut their hair short, which I always applaud, and advise the mothers to keep it so till they get big. One wonders they should not all cut it off, as scarcely any, except the long ends, or a few stray hairs, is allowed to be seen, the covering being always tied over the whole head among the poor children. Probably they would get sunstrokes if they did not thus protect the head in a country where the power of the sun is so great during most of the year.

It seems as if every depth had a lower depth, and the boys are even worse than the girls, as to uncleanness: at least, it is more difficult to make them care. Vanity comes in to assist a

girl in thinking of her appearance when once she begins to see that a clean face is better than one smeared with mud and dust; but the boy only wishes to enjoy his play unfettered. The two or three small boys who were allowed on sufferance with their sisters (all under four years old) came each day as begrimed as before, of course; but they soon learned to submit patiently to the daily ceremony at school. One, a little Copt boy, named Mansoor, was really a lovely little fellow when clean, in spite of the most wretched and unbecoming garment—he had but one; such sweet black eyes, with a little wistful expression! I used to think how nice that child would look in a white frock and scarlet sash; however, he was just as happy making dust-heaps and nibbling sugarcane; and he may wear white one day of another kind, poor child, if he learns to know the truth, and to become a conqueror over sin through the power of the Spirit. The name Mansoor signifies, properly, one who has obtained a victory, or, rather, one

who has been enabled by God to gain the victory,—a beautiful meaning.

It may interest those who are occupied about schools, or who love the subject of teaching for its own sake, to glance over a translation of the brief catechism which the children in Bab-el-Bahar are taught; it must be borne in mind that it was arranged for the use of Moslims especially, and with a view to quite young children; the corresponding Arabic is as simple in its wording as the English given here, which is as nearly literal as the difference of the language permits.

Question. Who made you?

Answer. God.

Q. Where is the difference between you and the brutes?

A. I have a soul, and they have not.

Q. What will happen to your body?

A. It will die and be laid in the ground.

Q. What will then happen to your soul?

A. My soul will either go to heaven or to hell.

Q. What is heaven?

A. A beautiful place, where there is no sin and no sorrow, and where God dwells.

Q. What is hell?

A. A dreadful place of misery, far from God.

Q. How can you go to heaven?

A. I must love God and obey him all my life.

Q. Are you able to do this?

A. Not of myself, because my heart is evil; I often do wrong.

Q. Are all people sinners?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they deserve heaven?

A. No, they deserve hell; but God is willing to forgive their sins.

Q. For whose sake will God forgive sin?

A. For the sake of Jesus Christ his Son, who bore the punishment of sin in his own person.

Q. Why do you call Jesus Christ the Son of God?

A. Because he is the Spirit of God in a human body.

Q. What did he suffer for us?

A. He died upon the cross, a cruel death, that we might receive pardon instead of punishment.

Q. Did his body remain in the ground?

A. No; he rose the third day, and his body is now in heaven.

Q. Will he enable you to obey and love God?

A. Yes; he will enable me to do so by his Holy Spirit, if I trust in him.

Q. Where do you learn this?

A. In God's book, called the Bible.

Q. What will happen to you if you do not obey God and die without forgiveness?

A. I shall go to that dreadful place.

Q. Why is Jesus called the Saviour?

A. Because he came to save people from their sins.

Q. Is he willing to save you?

A. Yes; for he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

Q. What must you, then, do?

A. I must pray God to change my heart and give me his Holy Spirit, and to forgive me for Jesus Christ's sake, and to take me when I die to heaven.

The foregoing questions and answers are all that had been taught when I left Cairo; but a few further ones have since that been added, to teach the doctrines of the Christian faith more fully, especially the resurrection of the body, and day of judgment, &c.; and it will gradually be enlarged as the scholars' minds are more developed and their powers of learning by heart improved. In the beginning of a school like this, the time occupied in teaching half a dozen questions and answers, and the difficulty (where the attendance is not regular), are not to be understood save by experience.

Zeynab. p. 245.

CHAPTER XX.

ZEYNAB.

OUR readers will not fail to recollect a notice taken of the girl in the tamarisk-grove, near the little desert, in whom I took a strong interest. In the course of the winter, after my return to Cairo, I made several ineffectual attempts to find her, and began almost to despair, and to think (what was indeed highly probable) that she must have married and removed to some other village, if she were not dead. I had made inquiries about her of the poor women or children who were often to be met with near the grove, and in the barley- and dourra-fields around it; and two or three wrong Zeynabs had been produced. One came at last, who,

hoping, perhaps, for some present if I believed her to be an old acquaintance, persisted, in a confused and hesitating way, that she remembered me, and was the girl I meant; but I was sure I should recognize the face; and, moreover, this individual was decidedly younger than Zeynab was when I had seen her, and nearly two years could not have had the effect of making her grow backwards: so the false maiden was civilly rejected. It was on one Saturday, when I had come out to spend my weekly holiday in the pure air of the country, and was sitting under the light-falling tamarisk shade, talking to a group of women and girls. One of them was an intelligent woman, who appeared really anxious to listen to a short portion of Scripture which I read to them, and was quite vexed with another who interrupted us every minute by begging to know "what this dress was made of," or some such remark.

After some time had passed, and I thought they had had as much as they could attend to

for one day, I broke up the circle, and went to stroll among the fields. On my return, all were gone but the woman alluded to. She sat beside my maid (who was engaged in sewing under one of the trees), and seemed as if she did not wish to go away. I sat down with a sketch-book, and was beginning to renew the conversation with her, when an elderly peasant-woman—very dark, but not bad-looking, and less ragged and dirty than the others had been—came quickly towards us from the dourra-field, and, seizing my hand, exclaimed, "I am Zeynab's mother." She kissed my hand, and then stooped down for a moment, gazing with interest and curiosity, then, springing up, caught me round the neck and bestowed on me several hearty kisses, saying, "I know you; my daughter knows you—she is Zeynab!" Though I never had seen the woman before, I did not feel the smallest doubt that she really was what she professed to be, and that the lost sheep was found: it seemed to be an instinct of belief. She proceeded to tell me that

Zeynab was making bread in the house, and could not come out directly (that being a business which cannot be interrupted when once commenced), but that she had heard from one of the girls of the village that the lady she knew was there and was asking for her; and she had said, "Oh, mother, go quickly to her and tell her I will soon come." So she had set off at once in search of her daughter's friend. She asked if I could stay till evening. I said I could stay two hours more, but, if she liked, instead of waiting there, I would go to her house and see her daughter. She was delighted, and said I should be "welcome, —and very welcome!" and pointed the way across the fields.

The village was only a quarter of a mile off, and consisted, like most Egyptian villages, of a number of mud huts, all built close together (flat-roofed, of course), and many of them with rounded walls, something like a cheese with a hole in one side. None appeared to have any windows, but most had some sort of door;—

the whole concern swarming, as usual, with children and animals, and rubbish of every sort,—the use of a broom being apparently unknown there.

As we approached, the mother gave a signal, and called out, "There she is!—that is Zeynab!" as a girl with a little child on her shoulder (her nephew) came out of one of the huts. She hastily set down her burden on the ground and ran up to us. I knew my old acquaintance instantly; and she, on her part, recollected me equally well: with a cry of joy, she caught and pressed my hands in both her's, and then flung her arms round my neck, as her mother had done, her bright eyes sparkling with pleasure. Then they brought us into the house, the servant staying at the roadside with the asses, and looking, to say truth, as if he thought visiting in mud cabins was a very vulgar taste in his employer. This was not the abode of actual poverty, for in their rank of life the family of Zeynab were evidently tolerably well off, their wants being

so few and simple. The hut was large, and not so dirty as many I have seen,—though the floor was encumbered with straw and corn-cobs and three or four goats were feeding on dourra-leaves at one end. There were two little divisions (I cannot call them rooms, as only a low ridge of dried mud separated them from the main apartments), one of which contained the oven, where Zeynab's sister and sister-in-law were busy with the bread, the latter having apparently come in to take her place, and thus leaving her free to attend to her guest. The thin flaps of bread were clapped against the side of the oven, to which they stick somehow till they are baked: a very short time suffices; but, as a large batch is usually prepared at once, and a great many loaves are needed, being so small, a considerable time is occupied by the process. Zeynab's mother brought a basket of the fresh dourra bread, and then, from a hole in the wall, took a pickled turnip, which she offered in the palm of her hand,—plates and dishes not being

part of the furniture of her house. A piece of jibn, or salt curd (which, when clean, is a good and wholesome article), followed; and to refuse these dainties would have affronted her: so I had to eat a little, as in the Bedouins' houses, and conceal the rest in a pocket-handkerchief or in the straw behind me. The good creature was giving the best she had, and it never occurred to her that things being dirty was any objection to them. Meantime, Zeynab was pounding coffee in a metal mortar with a heavy wooden pestle of rude manufacture. She then took a handful of the dry corn-cobs and put them in a mangal, or earthen vessel for fire, and set them alight, placing a coffee-pot on the flame. In a short time her coffee was ready, and presented by the mother in Arab style,—*i.e.* in small cups, without sugar or milk. Zeynab sat by me as soon as her task was over, holding my hand in her's, and expressing her pleasure at our meeting, even more by her face than by her words. I tried to recall to her mind some-

thing of the conversation I had formerly had with her the last morning I saw her, and she seemed to recollect it perfectly, and mentioned one or two things which I could scarcely have expected to remain in her memory.

"And the prayer, Zeynab?" I asked: "do you remember it?"

"I remember part,—not all," she replied.

I said the first clause, "O Lord, give me thy Holy Spirit," and she immediately finished it, adding,—

"'And lead me to the truth.' I often say that part,—very often," she continued; "but the first part, about the Spirit, I forgot."

"Thank God you have not forgotten all!"

"No, indeed; I have not forgotten; and I never forget you," said the girl.

After talking some little time, I took leave, engaging them to come and see me and the school,—which they promised to do very soon, as Ramadan was near at hand, and no Moslims willingly undertake long walks or pay visits in that month, as they dare not take any re-

freshment. Early the following week my expected visitors made their appearance, between nine and ten o'clock. Zeynab and her mother walked into the class-room where I was teaching, one bearing a jar of new milk on her head, and the other a cloth in her hand, containing a number of fresh eggs. They had walked at least three miles with these things, as a present for me!

Zeynab's eyes shone like opals in her brown, sunburnt face, as she affectionately greeted me; and the old dame was as cordial in her own way. I brought them up-stairs; and they were as delighted and amazed at the sight of the simple apartment as if it had been a room in a palace. The dimity curtain, and clean, whitewashed walls, the plain but commodious divan, and a deal table covered with a crimson cotton cloth, appeared wonderful luxuries to eyes only accustomed to dirty and unfurnished mud cabins. The mother was the most curious, and begged permission to look behind the curtain, which formed one end of the long

room into a bed-chamber. Here her surprise and admiration were increased by the spectacle of a little toilet-stand of the humblest style possible, but above which hung a mirror longer than her *hand*, and in which she could, for the first time, see her whole face reflected. "Zeynab, girl, come here!—Come and look!" she exclaimed. The brushes and pin-cushion were scarcely less of curiosities; and many were her exclamations of "wonderful!" I asked if she had found any difficulty in discovering the house. "No," she said. "I did just as you told me,—came first to the Bab-el-Hadeed, then walked up the broad road, and then asked for Bab-el-Bahar, and they showed me; then I came, as you said, to the blacksmith's shop, and he knew you, and said this was the house."

Among the various articles in the room, none more amazed my guests than the book-shelf, with about two dozen of volumes. "Have you really read all those books?" the mother said, and was evidently amazed at the amount of learning it implied; she even rose again

from her seat, and went to the shelf to look closer at the books and count them over. "This is your gospel, is it not?" said Zeynab, pointing to the Arabic Testament on the table. This seemed a favourable moment for introducing the book; and I took it up and offered to read a story from it. Zeynab wished to listen; but her mother, although acquiescing, was too full of what she saw to give her attention, and interrupted me incessantly. She was one who evidently preferred her own voice to any thing else. Just as I had found the place, and was commencing to read, she exclaimed, "I declare, your ears are not bored! Tell me why. Have you no ear-rings? And I do not see jewels! Have you not many jewels?" "Very few," I told her; "for I cared more about other things." After a little talk about jewels, I asked Zeynab if she knew the best ornament any woman could have,—and then told her how God liked a meek and quiet spirit in us, better than gold or diamonds. Yet many women thought more of these pretty things

to hang on their necks than of pleasing God. "Certainly," said the mother, who would not let the girl get in a single word, "we should above all think of our souls, and praise God and the prophet, our Lord Mohammed." I feared to close the door against myself if I got into an argument with the old lady about her prophet, especially as my limited language might hinder my making myself clearly understood on the subject: so I turned from it by finishing the history I had begun, with which she expressed herself pleased,—though she interrupted so often that I fear she could not have carried much away with her. Meantime, the cook had, at my desire, been preparing such a meal as my guests were likely to relish, and, as it was noon, I took them to the class-room, now empty, where it was spread, on a clean white napkin, on the floor; for, as they had never sat at a table, it would only have made them feel awkward to induce them to attempt it. The clean cloth, however, struck the old woman as a delicate attention,

for she thanked me as if for a great compliment; and possibly the hint may be advantageous, for she might attain to a piece of clean cotton, if not to a damask napkin, in her own cabin. No plates were laid, but plenty of native bread, and a dish of rice cooked with butter, and a fowl stewed with onions and tomatoes,—which is a favourite native dish, and by no means a contemptible one. My guests rarely indulged in such dainties, and probably never tasted meat but on occasion of some great festivals. They would not, however, have enjoyed the repast unless their hostess had sat down and "dipped in the dish" with them: it would have been supposed, if she declined, that she felt too proud to share with them.

Though knives, forks and spoons are certainly a very good invention, I am bound to allow that Orientals do not eat as unpleasantly without their aid as some awkward or ill-mannered persons contrive to do with them: even Zeynab and her mother, simple peasants

as they were, managed very deftly and nicely: a bit of the tough native bread was easily folded into a sort of spoon, with which they took up rice, &c. Some native sweets concluded the entertainment; after which they came into the school-room to see the scholars at work, and stayed another hour watching the process and chatting, till I confess to having got quite tired, and my stock of Arabic seemed exhausted. But it is the custom to pay visits of great length in the East, and the poor things had put on their best clothes for the occasion, and were so well pleased that I would not on any account have hurried them away. The gala costume consisted of a coloured-print jacket and trowsers, with a tob (or loose outer robe) of very thin, dark-blue cotton, almost like coarse, unstarched muslin, and a veil of the same, with necklaces of brass beads: the mother had solid silver bracelets; but the daughter had nothing but glass beads for her share. They departed at last, well satisfied with their day; and though

I had not been able to do them any good on this occasion, owing to the old lady's excessive fondness for talking, which made it useless to read, yet the keeping up the acquaintance was very important, as giving one hopes of making way by degrees.

It seemed that this girl's remaining unmarried later than is customary (for she could not be less than seventeen, even allowing for Egyptians looking older for their age than we do) was a special mercy; as, had she been removed to any distance and occupied with the cares of a young family, it is scarcely likely that I could have found her out, or that her interest in the renewal of the acquaintance would have been so strong. Remembering the vain attempts made to discover her for some time, and the trifling circumstance which was the means of her being found (the mother told me while at dinner that it was from my having described the colour of her eyes, which are not black like most Egyptians'), I feel deeply thankful for the opportunity

thus granted, and cannot doubt that it was given in answer to prayer. He whose eye is over all things in heaven and earth saw that there were many peasant maidens in this little hamlet, but to one was His messenger sent: perhaps among all the Zeynabs there, this was the one most ready to receive something of the truth: at all events, her heart is open to feel affection for a stranger and foreigner, and, by His blessing, that affection may prove the door of entrance for better things than earthly friendship.

CHAPTER XXI.

ZEYNAB AGAIN.

THE next occasion on which I visited my young friend on the borders of the desert was about the middle of Ramadan. The air in that neighbourhood is delightfully pure and healthful; so that the distance did not deter me from going there more frequently than to nearer spots. The green clover and young corn seemed actually to run up into the bare sand of the desert,—so close are vegetation and barrenness in this region. Doubtless, if irrigation were carried further, the wilderness would be changed into a fruitful field. The water, running in its small clear rills, and the luxuriant vegetation following it wherever it went, was a sight I never wearied of, and

which naturally suggested the comparison of the fruits of Christian life following wherever the water of life flows. In such a moral wilderness as Egypt, how often one longs to see more labourers at work, making channels, as it were, for the water, which Christ alone can bestow, to fertilize the barren ground!

The first afternoon I could spare, I set out to pay a visit to Zeynab. Though this month of fasting is not very favourable for talking to people, yet I did not wish to let so long a period pass by. I found her keeping house, alone with her little nephew. The schoolmatron was with me, having begged so much to come that I did not like to refuse her, although far more of a hindrance than a help on visits to the poor, as she was very fond of religious discussions, and talked so fast, using many words I did not understand, that I was in constant fear of her teaching something wrong.

There is no dislike to the reading of the Scriptures among those of her church, as far

as I could judge: they seem, on the contrary, willing to receive it, if able to read. But this poor woman was quite at the mercy of her priest, being so ignorant, and believed, as of equal authority with Scripture, a store of the most absurd monkish legends: I very rarely, therefore, took her with me into the poor people's houses. When I could get in a word, by a pause in the old lady's chattering, I asked Zeynab about prayer, and found that she and her mother actually went through the five prescribed forms of prayer, like the men,—a practice not observed by Moslim women in general. I remarked this; and she replied that very few did so,—that most women never prayed. "But we do," she added, with a little air of pride,—which was not strange, for it is looked on quite as an act of merit in women. I tried to show her the nature of real prayer; and she seemed much interested in religious subjects, and quite ready to speak and listen, only that the poor matron's not very judicious remarks sometimes interrupted us. The ne-

phew, little Salem, a fine boy about two years old, was, meantime, kept from disturbing by my maid, who good-naturedly amused him. His young aunt seemed very proud of his broken phrases and infantine ways, just as aunts are wont to be in our country; and it was entertaining to note the resemblances and differences of his little remarks to those of children at home. "Where is father, Salem?" says the aunt. "With the camels," stammers the boy, pointing with his little hand towards the door. "Ah! where are the camels? Can Salem see camels?" At this Salem jumps up, and begins making the clicking sound used by the camel-drivers, brandishing a twig, and trying to lisp out something about "go to father and camels."

I asked Zeynab to come out and sit under the trees at the sacchia, as it was close in the cabin, and she willingly brought her young charge thither: a young friend of her's joined us, and both girls listened attentively while I read to them a story from the gospel.

I was sorry not to be able to offer them even an orange, by way of refreshment, but did not like to tempt them to break the fast, as it would expose them to persecution, and is, after all, a matter of indifference in itself, unless so far as regarded in the light of an act meritorious in God's sight. I always told the poor women that God did not command people to go without food all day for a month, and that he was really angry when wicked words came from our mouths, not when we put bread into them; but I never urged them to break Ramadan.

On one of my visits to Zeynab's village I took an English lady with me, who, though she could not understand the language, was anxious to see the interior of a native dwelling. It was warm weather, and we had ridden out to breakfast; for the earlier people can get out the better, when the winter is over and the sun is beginning to assert his power. We took our coffee under the tamarisks, and then went to the neighbouring cluster of mud

huts, where I was now scarcely looked on as a stranger. Zeynab and her mother were both at home, and cordially welcomed me and my friend. After some chat, and a profusion of compliments from the good mother, who is great in that line, I at length produced my book, and offered to read. Zeynab was willing, as indeed she always seemed to be, having an evident interest in the subject of religion; her younger sister, and a girl, who was, she told me, a very dear friend, joined us, and they all listened very attentively.

About a month before I left Cairo, Zeynab came to pay me a visit by herself; she wanted a bandage I had promised her for a swelled knee of some kind, and obtained her mother's leave to come to my house alone. The mother came to town with her, but was obliged to go and sell something or other elsewhere, and actually trusted the girl to stay all the morning at the house of a Christian and foreigner, and to return by herself, when I liked to send her home. A greater proof of confidence could

hardly be. A Moslim woman to trust her girl in a strange house, without her watchful eye, at such a distance from her residence, was no light thing; for to leave their own village, if in the country, or their own "quarter," if inhabitants of the town, unless accompanied by the mother, is what an Egyptian girl is seldom allowed to do; indeed, many in the town, old as well as young, never quit their own quarter, as I believe. In the country there is more freedom, probably; but still a Christian's house three miles off would have been an awful idea to Zeynab's mother a year ago, I dare say; now it did not seem at all extraordinary that her girl should visit "Sitti M." As usual, she brought a present of new milk, and delivered many kindly messages and salutations from her mother; and then, finding me engaged in domestic occupations, she adjusted her dark veil so as to display her pretty print jacket within, and seated herself to converse with me, while at the same time watching my employment with no small inte-

rest. I believe these poor Egyptians would learn more from seeing what we do in household matters, about the importance of cleanliness and neatness, &c., than by any precepts we could possibly give them on the subject. "What is that for? Why do you do that?" they will ask, as they look on with good-humoured surprise. Nothing seems more to strike the women as a happy and novel idea than the putting on an apron when engaged in any occupation likely to soil the dress; they perform every thing, whether cookery, or sweeping a room, or washing vessels, &c., all without any protection, and, therefore, generally look slatternly enough after them.

When we returned to the sitting-room, I took advantage of having her without her garrulous parent to endeavour to give her a little instruction in higher matters,—saying, "Look, Zeynab, my child; I shall be obliged to leave you before long, and I wish to read you something before I go away. I fear you are forgetting all I have told you: try to re-

collect it when I am far from you." Zeynab promised, and assured me she would not forget, again and again. I then proposed to read from the *angeel* (Gospel), saying that I had before read to her some of the wonders and miracles of Jesus Christ, and that I wished her now to hear some of his conversation,—his teaching,—and that I would read to her how he taught a man who came to him by night to ask questions. She appeared pleased, and seated herself at my feet, looking up with a face full of intelligent interest, and listened attentively while I read the third chapter of St. John's Gospel down to the end of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus,—explaining, as well as I was able, as we went, and endeavouring to show her the need of a change of heart, and to give her some notion of the work of the Holy Spirit here spoken of. She paid earnest heed, as any one must have seen who had looked at her expressive, wondering face; and though I could not understand *all* the many questions and remarks she made, it was evi-

dent, from her asking so many, that her mind had in some degree taken hold of the subject. She understood all I said to her, I believe, as far as the *words* went; for several months of study and practice had, of course, given me much more fluency than when our acquaintance had begun. Still, it was but a few grains that could be sown in this uncultivated soil, with such limited opportunities,—any thing like constant or regular instruction being impossible. On this occasion I had Zeynab all to myself, and she stayed three hours at the house, and would even have stayed longer, but that I was then obliged to go out; and, after being refreshed with a simple repast of bread and dried fruit in the schoolroom, she took leave, entreating me to come and see her at the village before going away; which I promised to do, but illness prevented me.

I was so fearful of inducing any one to acquiesce from a wish to please, or from a partial conviction—a sort of half-belief—when the truth has not really been received into the

mind, that I have never pressed Zeynab to tell me how far she *believed* what I told her; only trying to make sure that she understood what I said. Very often she voluntarily said, "That is good;" or, if I said, "Is that true?" would reply, "It is true; it certainly is true!"

But whether the intellect alone is yet touched, or whether the seed has taken root in the heart, I cannot venture to pronounce: God knows. I can only say with certainty that she is not exactly where she was a year ago; and most earnestly would I recommend her to the prayers of any Christian reader who may feel an interest in her, after hearing how the lost one was found at length. I was anxious to find her, to do her good if possible; and after "many days" the search was successful. Surely we may hope that the Good Shepherd is also looking for her, and that he will find and bring home this lost sheep of the wilderness; for how cold and feeble is our love for souls, compared to His who gave His life for the sheep!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOYS' SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

WHAT can be done for the boys? was a question frequently before my thoughts; for in my immediate neighbourhood they appeared a most neglected set of beings. Nor did schools of a superior class meet the difficulty. Nothing can supply the place of a ragged school in large cities,—by which we understand a school where the lowest and poorest children, whose parents will not or cannot pay for their teaching, and in a majority of cases do not care whether they have it or not, may be collected and taught the bare essentials of education, such as Scripture and reading, with the rudiments of some other things, as far as circumstances permit. Where

a day-school of this kind is not practicable, an evening class is often attained; and, at all events, a Sunday-school of some sort or other may be managed in most places, because Christian persons occupied all the week are often ready to give an hour or two of their Sunday for the gratuitous instruction of the ignorant. The weekdays were occupied with the girls' school, and I had no funds at my disposal to start a similar one for boys; but to collect a few of these after service on Sunday, and thus make a beginning which might hereafter be increased into a daily school, seemed by no means an impossible thing to attempt, and the rest of Saturday made one fresher for such work on Sunday. The poor boy who had wished to be a girl, in order to be admitted to the school-festival, was, unluckily for him, no longer within reach: perhaps his father thought change of air might benefit his mother's tongue (she had been the chief scold of the quarter): certain it is, they were all gone, and I never again saw the boy in the lanes near Bab-

el-Bahar. But there were plenty of others whose names and faces were familiar to me, most of them brothers to my girls, besides a more changing, ragged crew, the friends and acquaintance of my neighbours, who came from time to time to fight with them for sugarcanes, to assist in the composition of dust-heaps (which, from the dryness of the climate, are more in fashion than "mud pies," though these are manufactured also quite successfully), and last, but not least, to join in tormenting a certain huge brown ram, which looked exactly like a door-mat with a head and legs to it, and which was driven up and down the lane by a troop of little boys, till I expected to see it knock them down and kill them; but the poor brute was very gentle, and bore a great deal, and they did sometimes feed it with part of their sugarcanes (especially the tops, which they could not eat): so perhaps it had not so miserable a life as one might have supposed. Some of these boys, I found, went to the Mohammedan school, which they dislike

cordially, being often severely beaten, and not furnished with pictures or amusing books, or any thing that could lighten the labour of spelling and reading. The greater number, however, did not go anywhere, and did not know their letters.

I spoke to some, whom I met playing at the door, one day, and asked if they would like to come to my house and see some pictures, and hear histories of Moses and David, and learn something out of God's book. Two or three said they would; others laughed; and the smallest stared wonderingly, without saying a word. There was one little fellow whose roguish face was quite familiar; I often saw him making mimic shops with bits of broken crockery upon the door-step, in company with one or two little girls, and, as he moved his toys to let the owner of the house go in or come out, he always used to laugh merrily and beg leave to kiss my hand and ask if he might not come to school. I occasionally dropped nuts or dates out of the window to

him and some young companions in the evening, which made them exceedingly happy; and that, perhaps, was one reason for the friendly feeling evinced by this boy, whose demonstrations were quite diverting. He had a slight squint of one eye, but it seemed only to enhance the humorous expression of his face, as he would stand by the donkey when I was preparing to mount it for a ride, saying, "Now, teacher, when may I come to school?"

I told him, one day, that I was going to have Sunday-school for the boys; all the week was for the girls, but they should have school on one day if they would come. I also told the girls who had brothers to let them know. While trying to get pupils, on one hand, it was necessary to get teachers, on the other, as a man would be necessary, if any big boys came, to keep order, &c.; and, besides, the year was already far advanced; April had begun, and I had not quite two months more to stay, and must leave successors. There was, however, no difficulty in finding assistants. A gentleman con-

nected with the Malta College Cairo school promised to ask his head-teacher, a Protestant Copt, to come now and then; and with the Moslim missionary, and one or two other Protestant Syrian friends, there was no fear of my not having some one or other each Sunday to assist in teaching.

When Sunday arrived, finding no boys made their appearance, I went down into the lane to look for them; but, though it usually swarmed, on this morning, as if on purpose to try our faith and patience, not a boy was in sight; only a girl was visible; she was playing in a little heap of rubbish, all by herself.

"Saida!" I cried. She came immediately at my call, being one of the scholars. I asked her if she would find her own brother, if she had one, and, if not, call some of her schoolfellows and send them to find their's. She looked rather bewildered, not having, apparently, heard of the scheme, though it had been mentioned more than once in school. However, she trotted off at last; and, mean-

time, I turned into the main street, which was very quiet at this the hottest time of day. I would gladly have fixed a later hour, for I feared many boys would be sleeping about this time in the hot months; but I did not like to choose an hour which would interfere with either the English or American services, on the teachers' account.

In the street were a group of boys assembled at a doorway, quarrelling: they were mostly quite little boys, from three or four up to ten years of age, by their appearance. Two women sat by, without interfering in the least. I went up and gently remonstrated with them for disputing, and asked them, instead of beating one another, to come with me and learn something good at the school yonder. They were astonished, and stopped quarrelling to listen.

One of the mothers said, "You are the teacher, are you not?"

"Yes, for the girls; but I wish to let the

boys have a little teaching also, for I love them as well as girls."

I explained to them that for an hour or two on this day there was to be a school for the boys, and that some kind gentlemen had promised to teach them out of God's book, if they would come to my house. The women said it was very good, though without expressing any lively desire that their sons should learn; which I could not expect,—that they did not oppose it was all I could hope; for, after all, it did require some confidence to send their children with a stranger, of a different nation and religion, on her bare word. But they told the boys to go if they wished; and one patted her little son on the shoulder, and encouraged him to go, saying, "She will not beat you." Two went away, looking rather sulky; but the rest came with me; and I brought them in triumphantly.

At the door we met a girl dragging a young brother in great pride, and she was followed by two or three more with *their* brothers,—

coaxing and pulling them along, and trying to reassure them by patting them, and telling of the pleasures and advantages of school, while the poor boys hung back, and tried to free their arms, half laughing, as if a little ashamed of their fears. It was a curious sight thus to see the despised part of the population using the powers which a little smattering of superior knowledge had given them, trying to bring their brothers to get a share, and in the most affectionate manner persuading them not to be afraid.

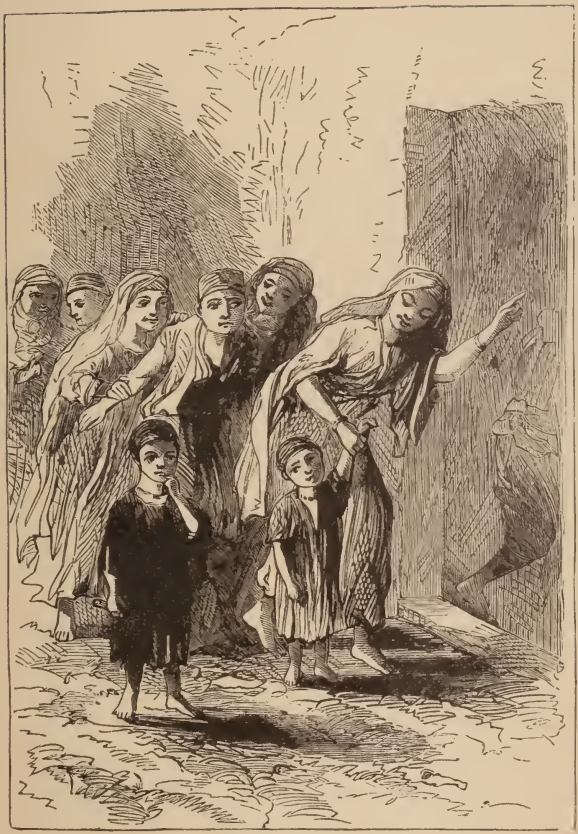
Accustomed to the harsh treatment in vogue at Moslim schools, the boys were much more timid than the girls had been at first. Two or three who had been coaxed inside the door suddenly lost heart, and, crying out, "They will beat us!" turned and fled precipitately. The others came up and stayed; but one little fellow, having only one eye, and a thick shag of hair hanging from his head (which gave him a strange appearance here, where the boys' hair is usually shaved), only consented to stay

on the condition of being allowed to keep the door wide open by sitting on the ground with his back against it; so that at any sign of foul play he might get off, as I suppose. He gave no motive for this singular choice of a seat, but said if we did not let him sit there he would not remain.

They were a ragged and dirty crew, as may be imagined. I can scarcely say how many we had that first day, as two or three went and others came; but I think nine stayed. These were clad in blue or white shirts, or rather garments which had formerly been so but were now nearly undistinguishable; and cotton caps on their little cropped heads. Certainly, dress had not done much for them; but they had bright, intelligent eyes, which lit up as they glanced curiously at the pictures on the wall. The younger ones all clamoured to stay with the lady; and I divided them from the older boys, giving these over to the young Copt, who was my assistant that day. The little fellows sat in a row be-

fore me: all were Moslims but one, named George (Jerjas, or, in Cairo, Gergas). He was a friend of the others, however, and placed little Mohammed (a fat, round-faced little Moslim, of four years old) on his lap, that he might better see the picture I was showing them, of the finding of Moses. I talked to them, and asked questions, and amused rather than taught, this first day; the great poin being to induce them to get the habit of coming here on Sundays. We only kept them an hour, fearing to tire them.

The second Sunday we had thirteen scholars. Before my assistant arrived, seven boys had come; and I was so afraid of their running away, if left to wait outside, that I hurried down and admitted them, though it was before the right time. People who have no clocks cannot be very exact. Before long, the girls brought another batch of scholars; and at the same time a Syrian friend, belonging to an English mercantile house, came to my aid, and, being accustomed to Sunday-school work



"Before long, the girls brought another batch of scholars." p. 282.

in Alexandria, proved a good teacher. He took the older boys and taught them a text of Scripture, besides reading and explaining a short portion and showing them pictures. I did the same, only omitting the reading to the little fellows, and, instead of it, teaching them a few letters of the alphabet.

By degrees a more regular system may be introduced; but till a set of children are got into the habit of attending every week, we cannot make it more than a *class*: a real school may follow this little beginning.

From this time we had a few lads every Sunday,—sometimes ten or twelve, sometimes only three or four; but no Sunday passed without at least a few coming.

As Sunday is, of course, in no way different from other days to Moslim boys, they often forgot it at first, and some came on Monday, instead; others got an idle fit, and went off to play in some neighbouring lane, and let the hour pass by. Still, a beginning was made: the small end of the wedge was inserted into the log.

One day, three quite big boys, of sixteen or seventeen years of age, came in, curious to know what was going on, and consented to stay and listen to a chapter of the gospel read and explained by the missionary. Another time we had several little creatures of four or five; but Shoh's younger brother, Abdul Nebby (the servant of the prophet), was generally an attendant on the class; and also another called Achmet,—both lively, handsome boys, about ten or eleven, full of spirit and fun, and not averse to instruction. Being the children of near neighbours, and the brothers of my own girls, they had some personal acquaintance with me, and were always ready with a friendly salutation if I passed them in the street. My little squint-eyed friend, whose name I forget, used often to call out, "I remember Sunday," with a significant smile, if I was looking out of window, or pull at my hand or skirt, if we met at the door. And though I was obliged gently to withdraw the dress, sometimes, observing, "You must wash

your hands, my boy, before you touch my clothes; see how dirty they are!" he did not seem painfully daunted by the rebuke, but laughed and skipped round me in great glee, saying, "You are my mother!"

It may be that we shall not see very distinct results for a long time from this and similar attempts; but how few among Sunday-scholars in our own more favoured country give their teachers evidence of their being really Christians in heart as well as name! We know how often the seed sown is found after many years; and so it may be here, where the difficulty attending the sowing is so much greater. We would not be *satisfied* with a little, but we must thankfully feel that even this little is better than none,—that if our boys have but a dim and shadowy idea of Jesus Christ the Saviour, it is better than nothing, and that God may one day send help to develop further the little knowledge they have gained, in some way we cannot possibly foresee. One has often observed a tiny green shoot coming out of a

crack in a rock or great stone, and wondered how the feeble germ of life could be supported in so hard a soil; but gradually the chinks enlarge as the roots spread, and they make a way for themselves, little by little drinking in the dew from heaven, till at last a vigorous shrub is seen growing out of the barren rock. Thus, when working in a hard and dry soil, we must take advantage of every opening, however small, and, as it were, drop a seed into every crevice in the rock.

When prevented by an attack of illness from taking an active part in the Sunday-class, it was carried on by my friends; and since my quitting Cairo I have had a letter, telling me that they had assembled fifteen boys every Sunday since I left. Of course, their numbers will vary; but, by God's grace, I trust, the class will be kept on, and gradually increased, until we get a regular "ragged school" for the boys.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

MAY had set in; spring had long vanished, and burning summer reigned in the land; for May in Egypt is not like that capricious month in our country,—sometimes fair, smiling and flowery, sometimes cold and rainy,—as if winter were more than half inclined to return and send back the swallows in disgrace, kill the apple-blossoms, and shut up the invalids again in their chambers. In Cairo we do at least know pretty certainly what to expect, and can be prepared for it without any fear that thin dresses will be useless: dust and heat are regular enough in their arrival, and May has even much more of the hot wind than June, which is said by

the experienced to be less trying, on that account. When I left, it was the end of May, and the hot blasts were still raging, with shorter intervals than usual. The thermometer was 96° in the shade of one of the coolest houses in the town, but the hot wind made it virtually much hotter, from its parching effects. Except for a short distance, or in shaded streets, it was hardly safe to go out in the middle of the day,—at least, for any not natives of the country; and every one said so long a duration of heat was very uncommon and very trying (we had nine or ten days without any respite, three or four being the usual time, followed by at least two cool, pleasant days). However, so it was; and from this cause, as well as an attack of illness, it became necessary for me to give up several little plans which were to have been carried out this month. One of these had been to get a sort of meeting of the poor women, chiefly the scholars' mothers; but on this account it was out of my power to assemble them, as I had

hoped to do. Any thing like a regular periodical meeting, I found, was not likely to succeed just yet, being so contrary to all their habits and ways: so that visiting them at home, and getting half a dozen at a time together, as opportunity might allow, seemed all that could be managed during the winter and spring. But a meeting before any one's departure, or to welcome a friend back after an absence, is quite intelligible, and excites no suspicions; and several had promised to come, —when illness hindered this plan as well as others. But, in spite of these and some other hindrances, there was great cause for thankfulness in the retrospection which one naturally indulges in when winding up any sort of business at the end of a "season" and preparing to quit the scene of labour for a time.

That the little school held on its way was no small cause of gratitude; for how easily might such an attempt have been nipped in the bud! Nor had our winter been uneventful: public affairs had seen great changes, which might

have seriously affected resident Christians, and did cause them considerable anxiety at one time. The Viceroy's death, and the succession of a new Pasha to the dignity, made every European, and even every Copt, feel uneasy, until they could see that their rights were not likely to be injured. Then came the Sultan's visit (not very long after the first opening of the Sunday-school). It made a great bustle, and called forth, not loyalty (which people seldom feel for a foreign and non-resident monarch), but a good deal of parade and show; and it excited some fear and some curiosity. Why the brief visit was paid was not known; and the conjectures about it were numerous. However, we Christians were left in peace, and our schools undisturbed: therefore we were most thankful, for our part; and as to the natives, their interest and curiosity quickly died away, and the royal progress was, apparently, forgotten as soon as the lamps for the illumination had been taken away.

The splendid pageantry came and went like

a scene in a play: the officers riding through the streets, their swords glittering with the jewels on the hilts,—the rich housings of purple and crimson, heavy with gold and silver fringe, hanging from the horses' sides,—the gayly-dressed slaves,—the silks hung from the windows,—the torches carried before the carriages by night,—all passed in a few short days, and left no trace, reminding one of the words of Scripture.

It is interesting, to those who are either directly or indirectly occupied with sowing the seed of heavenly truth, to think of the contrast of now and then, the present and the future, while looking at the pageantry of some such scene as that of the Sultan's visit, and comparing it with the mean and wretched appearance of the group of poor men assembling round a Scripture reader, for instance; or with the class of ragged children clustering about their teacher, knowing, as they do, that if the good seed take root in the heart of the least and lowest among those little ones, he will

stand in the midst of the unchangeable brightness and glory, when the tinsel splendour that dazzled his childish eyes in bygone days has passed away forever!

But the reaping-time is not yet; and the sowing-time is often one of tears,—always one of anxious labour,—and demands much patient waiting, and much faith in Him who alone can give the increase.

It was a blessing, in looking back to the small beginning of the school here, and of the many difficulties attending its reopening in November last, to think that it was not now obliged to suspend operations, even during the illness of the superintendent or temporary absence for a longer period, as must shortly be the case. The Evangelist, Mr. Joseph Shakoor, came every morning during this last fortnight to give a Bible-lesson in my place; and Teresa carried on the spelling and reading afterwards. Both she and the embroideress, Dimiana, were punctual in attendance, quiet and steady, and constantly came to ask directions or report

progress to me; and the young voices sounded cheerfully through the house from an early hour till four o'clock in the afternoon. The scholars were better arranged than formerly,—the two small class-rooms having been made almost into one large room, by the opening of a wide doorway in the partition-wall; and thick reed-mats were hung at all the windows where the afternoon sun came in.

Though they seem thirsty during the prevalence of hot winds, and are always running to the water-jars, the native children do not suffer in health, and are, I think, more lively in the month of May than during the short period of cold in winter. But as summer advances, they feel the many hours of intense heat; and I agreed to let them be assembled as early as possible, and dismissed an hour sooner, after this month,—the afternoon, especially from two o'clock to five, being the very hottest time of the day. After that hour the beams begin to slant and the shadows to grow longer; and it is beautiful, when the sun draws in his

fiery shafts, to watch the stilling of the air, and the life and activity of the beings on earth, as the orange glow spreads over the sky, and the bright disk disappears behind the palms opposite the windows. Presently the glory is dimmed for a minute or two, and then returns, brighter and purer in hues than before, —like the sun's parting message to the land. It is not a long one: soon the apricot colour fades into soft greenish white, and then the blue haze of evening rapidly darkens every object. Meantime the old men sit and sip their coffee opposite the coffee-house; the women crowd the street with heavy water-pitchers on their heads; friendly greetings are exchanged between the workmen on their way home; the flocks of goats are heard bleating, as they come from their daily excursions into the country; while, above all other sounds, the voices of "girls and boys playing in the streets" can be heard, full of glee at the welcome coolness of the evening hour. The mosquitos, to be sure, come out in

armies when the sun is low; but we have a good to counterbalance this evil: the flies,—which cause really more annoyance, I think, as being so much more numerous, and so impudent and pertinacious in their attacks,—these all retire to sleep upon the ceiling, as regularly as chickens go to roost; and it becomes possible to write in peace, and to read, without incessantly waving a fly-flap.

And what of the neighbours formerly alluded to? Little change had taken place in the quarter, compared to what might be found in most streets of a European city, in the course of two years.

The Boab's mud lean-to against the schoolhouse had not existed on my return, and he had received a polite request that it might not be rebuilt: indeed, he and his numerous troop of children had obtained a somewhat better dwelling in the lane. The fruit-seller, Seid, had gone; and his scolding wife's voice was no more heard in Bab-el-Bahar, but enlivened some other quarter. The Boab's eldest son,

Ibraheem, kept a sweetmeat-shop in the fruit-stall's place: he appeared a steady, respectable young man; and his father made me a very fine speech, when taking leave of me (a day or two before starting), for having patronized him, by purchasing a quantity of sweets from him for my school-feast a little while ago, as well as some which I brought away as curiosities to young relatives in Europe. These juveniles will doubtless recollect Ibraheem's dainties, which they approved highly; and the pride of the old Boab will be great if he one day hears that his son's handiwork has actually been all the way over the sea and been eaten and praised by English children.

My old acquaintance Sitt Haanem, the dressmaker, had once visited me in the course of the winter, and begged me to come and see her. No one had visited her, she said (*i.e.* no Christian lady), since her change of residence: previously to that, an English lady, who was then taking charge of Bab-el-Bahar school, had once called on her; but her husband's

death, and her subsequent removal to the other end of the town, had taken her out of all Christian influence. I had, with a great deal of trouble, discovered her house at last, but found her absent; and it was too far to come again on a mere chance. Now, however, just a fortnight before my departure, she came in great joy to say that she was to be a neighbour again, having returned to her old quarters. She came frequently to see me, when she found me confined to a sofa,—the Eastern custom of visiting the sick being carried out more fully than is always beneficial to the patient, though they are most kindly in feeling and intention: their sympathy for sickness, and the attentions shown to those suffering in health, are a very amiable trait. I could not find that Sitt Haanem had made any advances in respect of religion; but she was very willing to discuss matters, had I been well enough for long conversations; and her friendly feelings were evident enough. She had grown very fat, and increased the heat

which the weather caused, by wearing a thick cloth jacket, because it was her best. She begged me to return to Cairo as soon as possible, and never to go away any more, and then we could talk and read a great deal.

And what of Shoh and Fatmeh, our old friends? Of the latter I have little to say: her gentle but passive nature leads one at first acquaintance to think her more deeply impressed than she really is: she feels all that is said at the time, but one impression soon effaces another; and, though affectionate whenever I met her, she rarely now came to the house, as her sister did, with no motive except a desire for instruction or sympathy.

Shoh's voice caught my ear one day during the last week at Cairo, sounding very angry, and complaining, in the street below,—first with other women's voices, and then alone, as if she had driven the rest from the field. I raised the window-blind, and, covering my head (for the heat of the sun was intense), looked out into the street, and saw her stand-

ing with her brother at the sweetmeat-shop, talking, and evidently very indignant about something, and seeming unmindful of poor little Hosna, whose wee head hung over her shoulder, quite uncovered, and exposed to a broiling sun. I called to her; and, angry as she was, she immediately obeyed the summons, and hastened up-stairs, though with rather a sullen expression of countenance. Before speaking a word, I put my hand on the baby's head; and it felt exactly like a hot loaf out of a baker's oven. "Shoh, my dear, the child will be sick, and die, if you do not take more care of her." Shoh was all attention to the child directly, and quite sorry. "Indeed," she said, "it was not well." I told her that was no wonder, as Hosna was just cutting her teeth and required great care, and remonstrated with her about the exposure to the sun. "Oh, her mendeel was lost in that high wind the other day:—it flew away!" said Shoh. "You could have covered her head with your veil. But, tell me, now, what was all that noise

about in the street?" Shoh seated herself on the ground before replying, as a long story had to be told, and then "began at the beginning," as children say. She had been telling her brother, Ibraheem, of her husband's misdeeds,—how he went to Suez to work on the railway, and left her none of his wages to buy food, and how she had been obliged to go and eat at her mother's, or she would have had no food!—and it was not good—it was very bad—to act so;—and how she showed him the child, and said (holding it up, to enact the scene as she spoke), "See! this is your child!" and yet he gave her no money to get it clothes, —adding, energetically, as she turned to me, "Who gave Hosna this frock? You did. And that little jacket? You! But for you, it would have no clothes; and yet its father gets money, but he gives me none!" I pitied her very much, for it did seem a hard case; and the more I inquired, the worse it seemed. The husband had been employed for some time on the railway; and some persons (more likely to

be Europeans than Arabs, I fear) had taught him to drink "araky," and thus his money went, instead of buying bread for his wife and clothes for the baby.

How much easier is vice learned than any thing good! and how few are the Lord's servants in this country! A "feeble folk," indeed, compared with the multitudes of Satan's army; and though, like the conies, they may say that they "have their dwelling in a rock," it is yet discouraging at the moment to see how often the poor and ignorant are led into deeper sins than they had before by those whose superior civilization endows them with outward superiority. All poor Shoh's natural violence of temper was excited by the bad conduct of her husband,—which was, as far as I could learn, a recent thing. Formerly, he used to beat her when angry; but that was too ordinary a matter for her to complain much about it: being left without food, and reduced, even for a time, to be dependent on

her parents, was a disgrace which she felt far more keenly than blows.

After giving the poor thing plenty of sympathy, and many pats on the shoulder, till she was a little calmer, I exhorted her to try and win her husband to better conduct by gentleness, and not again to shout out all his faults, so as to let all the street hear, but to pray often to God to change his heart. She looked rather incredulous at the idea of any change in that quarter, but said, "I will pray." I reminded her that she now knew a great deal more than many others did; that she had heard of God's love to the world, and of how Christ died for our sins, and of the Holy Spirit which our Father in heaven will give to those who pray to Him, and that she should try to be gentle and good, and to show others by her life that she knew something about the love of God.

After a little conversation, she became composed and cheered, and went off tolerably happy, with a piece of clean muslin tied on

the poor baby's head, and a bit of sugar in its hand. I saw her for the last time the morning I started: she was standing, weeping, at the door of my house, as the donkeys conveyed the luggage to the railway-station. Of the affectionateness of her heart there is no doubt,—poor thing! but her position is one of great difficulty, and her temper very impetuous; and I could not leave her without feeling very anxious.

These details of her, and of others with whom I came into contact, are, indeed, but "the short and simple annals of the poor," and contain much that is in itself both homely and trivial. It is, however, with the view of bringing the habits and situation, not of these individuals only, but of the class of which they are specimens, before the minds of those readers who take a lively interest in the condition of the poor in every land, that these additional sketches are published. They are unfinished stories, one and all, and we may never find their conclusion in this world; but

all the persons here alluded to were real living beings when the writer met with them; they are not fictitious or dressed-up characters, but actual Egyptian peasant women, feeling and acting much as do hundreds and thousands of others. If it were fiction, and not truth, it would be easy to make more entertaining stories, to speak of greater success, of more positive results, instead of stopping short at "We hope;" but in details which profess to be the bare and simple truth, we may not say a word more than the facts warrant, as they come under personal observation.

To say (as has sometimes been rashly declared) that the Moslims are ready to receive Christianity, and that the faith of the false Prophet is crumbling away, is what I would not venture for a moment to assert; and, I presume, judging from those whose wide experience gives them authority, that it is very far from being the case. But I can state, as a fact, that in the neighbourhood of Cairo the peasant population, both men and women, are

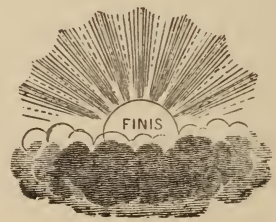
willing, and many of them eager, to listen to the word of God, when it is brought to them judiciously and discreetly as well as with kindness and zeal. The missionary can only sow the seed; the increase must come from above; but when he gains a fair hearing he is sowing; and truly the harvest is plenteous here, and the labourers few. While we earnestly pray for more labourers in these whitening fields, we must anxiously desire that they may be wise and cautious as well as zealous workers; for one rash and inexperienced labourer, acting with a want of prudence in a Moslim country, would easily shut doors which his predecessors had opened, and thus do more harm than good. But for the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,—the householder who can bring out of his treasury things new and old, as occasion may point, and who prays to be given the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove,—a better field for exertion in the Lord's cause can scarcely be found than Egypt. If India

has, in one way, more claims, as being part of our own empire, still Egypt has great demands upon us also, as being part of the Bible land,—those regions which are every man's country who has studied the Scripture: the land where God so often spoke to his servants, the land where Joseph died and Moses was born, and where the Saviour's infant feet trod, must have a sacred interest for every Christian, and its people,—"mixed multitudes" though they be—a peculiar claim.

It is a subject of great thankfulness to the writer of these little sketches to hear that the first part of "Ragged Life in Egypt" has been read with interest and pleasure at several "mothers' meetings," and that some have been led to feel an interest in those who have fewer privileges and advantages than themselves. Nor is the good thus obtained merely the opening of their minds to think of others: the poor women of Egypt may be benefited, through

God's grace, by the prayers of the poor in a distant land,—how, we may never exactly know in this world; but that prayer is a means of grace to the missionary, we have the highest authority:—"Ye also helping together by prayer for us" (2 Cor. i. 11); and many other passages of Scripture show that thus the weakest believers may help in the good work of spreading the gospel. The hard-worked washerwoman who has carried home the recollection of what she heard of the followers of the false Prophet, and thinks over it at her daily labour, and offers up humble and sincere prayers for the missionaries and Bible-women of Cairo, is a helper in the good cause. The electric telegraph, with all its wonders, is less wonderful than the chain of Christian love and sympathy, defying not only distance but language, and forming a mysterious link between those who are never to meet in life. But a day will come when some of them will meet in the great multitude of all kindreds and nations: surely there will be an Egyptian

band among the rest! May God in his mercy grant that some whose names are mentioned in these pages may be found at that day with their names written in the Book of Life, and their home among the many mansions prepared by the Lord for all who have trusted in him!



DATE DUE

GAYLORD #3523PI Printed in USA

60

DT70 .W55
Child-life in Egypt.
Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 00050 7766